

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The Jesuit Educational
Center for Human Development

Promoting Vocations

Safe Touches in Ministry

Approaches to Transformation

The Cybersexual Addiction

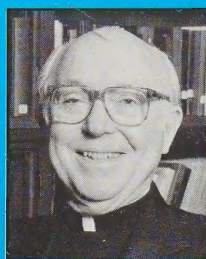
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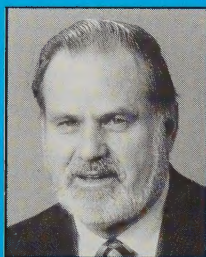
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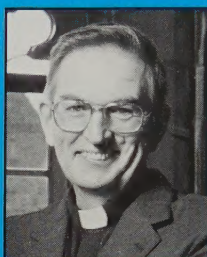
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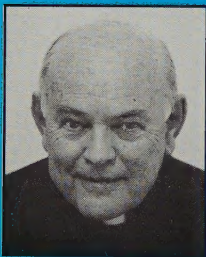
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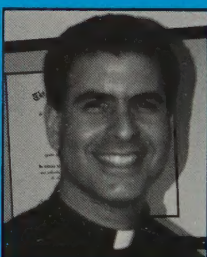
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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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Manuscripts should be submitted to the Executive Editor, Linda Amadeo, either (1) as e-mail attachments in any Windows-based (not Macintosh) word-processing program from 2000 or earlier or (2) by mail (see addresses below). Manuscripts are received with the understanding that they have not been previously published and are not currently under consideration elsewhere. Feature articles should be limited to 4,500 words (15 double-spaced pages), with no more than 6 recommended readings; filler items of between 500 and 1,000 words will be considered. All accepted material is subject to editing.

Authors are responsible for the completeness and accuracy of proper names in both text and bibliography. Acknowledgments must be given when substantial material is quoted from other publications. Provide author name(s), title of article, title of journal or book, volume number, page(s), month and year, and publisher's permission to use material.

Letters are welcome and will be published as space permits and at the discretion of the editors. Such communications should not exceed 600 words and are subject to editing.

Book reviews, which should not exceed 600 words in length, should be sent to the Book Review Editor, Jon O'Brien, S.J., D.O., c/o HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (see addresses below).

Unaccepted mailed manuscripts will not be returned unless requested and submitted with a stamped, self-addressed return envelope.

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EDITOR'S PAGE

CELEBRATING OUR TWENTY-FIRST BIRTHDAY

Earlier this week I was fortunate enough to attend a birthday party celebrating the long life and many accomplishments of one of my dearest friends. It was a supremely joyful event—one that reminded me how important birthdays are and how much pleasure we can derive from entering wholeheartedly into the spirit of them. They give us a chance to express our love and best wishes—and, at the same time, to realize how grateful we ought to be for every precious relationship God providentially places in our lives.

The party prompted me to think about the birthday we are celebrating these days here in the editorial office of *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*. The issue you are holding in your hands marks the end of twenty-one years of publishing, and hopefully the start of many more. Adding greatly to the joy and encouragement we are experiencing in connection with this anniversary is the message we just received from one of our long-standing readers in Massachusetts. Sister Susan James, one of the Daughters of Saint Paul, wrote:

Even though I have lots to do and it's getting late, I just had to jot this e-mail to let you know what a great magazine *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT* is. I get several monthly and even weekly publications to try to help me stay "in touch" and up-to-date in ministry. Some I partially read, relegate to a later time, or never make it to finish. Not so with *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*! In a day or so at most, I amaze myself with having read nearly every article . . . always timely topics to which I can relate . . . stimulating and energizing, positive and thought-provoking, good matter for conversation with other sisters in community. I can relate to the personal experiences shared, and if I had more time I'd write to each contributor to say so. Thanks

so much, and keep up the good work! I hope your file of encouraging messages has more than this one entry . . . I'm sure many more of your readers feel as I do.

As a matter of fact, our "file of encouraging messages" received during the past twenty-one years is disappointingly thin, but we have been inspired to keep trying to produce a valuable publication by hearing hundreds of privately spoken words of thanks and support. These, of course, are welcome messages, and I think we could never receive too many of them. However, the strongest stimulus to keep working at making *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT* a better and more helpful quarterly is the number of continuing subscriptions on our list, which I optimistically assume is proof of a small multitude of satisfied customers.

Looking back on our beginnings in 1980, I find it interesting to recall that in our first volume we estimated that

there are three groups of persons most likely to benefit from the type of material presented in *HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*. These include (1) persons responsible for providing religious leadership, such as bishops, superiors of religious congregations, and pastors; (2) persons entrusted with the task of spiritual, moral, and personal formation, especially in such settings as the seminary, convent, monastery, school, or family home; and (3) persons functioning as spiritual directors and conductors of retreats for religious, clergy, and laity.

Examining the composition of our list of current subscribers, I find that people who have been reading our most recent issues generally fall into those same three categories identified twenty-one years ago. Our articles at that time were mostly related to psychology, psychiatry, medicine, and counseling, along with spirituality. Our more recent offerings have additionally

dealt with topics germane to religious leadership, community life, spiritual formation, the screening of seminarians, and changes within the priesthood.

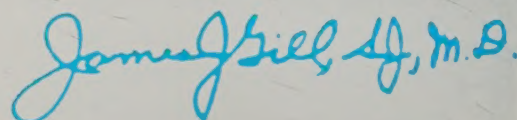
The central question we asked ourselves when we were preparing our first issue of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (and still keep in mind) was, "How can we best help people in influential positions to know enough about the art of facilitating the process of human development so that they can be as effective as possible in fostering the personal growth of those the Lord is entrusting to their care?"

Unchanging during all these years has been our desire to receive articles by authors around the world who can discuss what new things are being tried, and learned, about such topics as religious formation, dealing with change, aiding the aging and dying, helping novices and seminarians persevere, and avoiding burnout. As we stated in our very first issue, "We want to hear, too, what proves helpful, and (perhaps most instructive of all) what fails and why, so that we can pass this information along to our readers." Addressing our readers directly, we said, "We want to hear your ideas, your questions, your preferences. We need your recommendations, your comments about what we print that proves helpful, and

what interests, disappoints, or puzzles you." Right now I want to affirm those statements again. We need our subscribers' involvement to help us continually improve HUMAN DEVELOPMENT and increase its circulation, so that it can reach its full potential to benefit readers around the world.

As we celebrate our birthday with the Spring 2001 issue, I want to follow Sister James's example and say happy birthday and thank you to each of our current and past editors, editorial board members, staff, writers, benefactors, and faithful readers.

Our hope and prayer from the start has been that HUMAN DEVELOPMENT will always be pleasing and give glory to God, to whom we are grateful for the way our ministry has prospered. I hope you, our subscribers, will enjoy and find helpful these articles you are about to read, and all those that we will provide for you during the seasons and years to come.



James J. Gill, S.J., M.D.
Editor-in-Chief

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* * *

For more information, please see the back cover of this issue

The Cybersexual Addiction

*René J. Molenkamp, Ph.D.,
and Luisa M. Saffiotti, Ph.D.*

Popular use of the Internet—a global network of computers—started about ten years ago, when commercial providers were first permitted to sell Internet service to individuals. Since then, access to the Internet, and to the commercial part of the Internet called the World Wide Web (“the Web”), has expanded exponentially. Currently, millions of people all over the world have Internet access. Users of the Web have a choice of viewing written material, listening to sound, looking at pictures (graphics), and watching video material. We use the terms “Internet” and “Web” interchangeably in this article and include e-mail exchange as part of Internet or Web activity.

There are many advantages to using the Web: immediate access to a world of information that may enhance our knowledge for studies or ministry; access to other people in the community, and to friends and family, with a very quick turnaround; even instant communication with other Web users. Access to the Web is relatively cheap and almost always available. But there are also drawbacks to using the Web: it can take us away from social interactions; it can foster social isolation and withdrawal, sometimes culminating in depression; it is an easy distraction from other important things; and, ultimately, it can become addictive. Because Web surfing is mostly an isolated activity that takes

place in privacy, it is perhaps easier to hide Internet addiction than any other form of addiction. Some forms of Internet addiction involve gambling, shopping, gaming, stock trading, extensive researching, and cybersexual activity.

In this article we focus on some aspects of cybersexual activity and addiction. Our clinical experience and the available literature indicate clearly that cybersexual addiction is a problem for many people and that the problem is greatly underestimated. Here we describe the phenomenon, name some of the concerns, and explore characteristics of individuals at risk. We hope that the article is especially helpful for formators who, like parents, may experience a lack of knowledge about the emerging technological developments and some of their implications in forming and initiating a younger generation.

THE CYBERSEX PHENOMENON

Cybersexual activity can take many different forms: downloading sexually explicit pictures or stories, engaging in extensive sexually explicit e-mail exchanges, viewing sexually explicit videos through pornographic sites, looking at or providing vastly changing images through a Web cam (a camera with a link to the Web so that other people can follow what is

being recorded), conversing in a sexually explicit chatroom that may be a general room or a private one, and participating in instant communication with other Web users for the purpose of sharing sexual fantasies, sometimes culminating in cybersex, phone sex, masturbation, or an actual encounter.

Cybersexual activity usually happens anonymously; the participants do not have to disclose their identity. They may hide behind a screen name; many create a profile that does not match who they are in real life, which they use as a basis for communication with other people. Given the anonymity of the Web, it is not unusual for people to "change" profession, age, weight, and interests or to exaggerate their sexual likes and dislikes. For many people, Web use has become a safe way to explore hidden sexual fantasies. Individuals using the Web for this purpose create a fantasy world with its own rules, norms, and regulations that is far removed from the reality in which they live. Cyberinteractions with other people are limited to a narrow bandwidth, in comparison with the broad bandwidth of face-to-face encounters, in which we communicate not only with words but also with vocal intonation and the nonverbal messages conveyed through eye contact, body language, and clothing. In the narrow-bandwidth cyberinteraction there is much room for projection, which sustains the fantasy; there is often an immediate connection with another person, which may be perceived as instant intimacy. Sexual fantasies that are explored do not necessarily involve standard sexual practices.

Cybersex is surrounded by secrets; most people who engage in it do not talk about it with friends, family, community members, spiritual directors, or superiors. Engaging in cybersexual behavior has become a different way of managing conscious or unconscious conflict in the area of sexuality. Facing and managing one's sexual preferences and fantasies, developing the ability to have healthy conversations about sexuality, and integrating one's sexuality into everyday life are difficult tasks. The Web has become an arena in which people can explore the highly relational topic of sexuality without having to share who, what, or where they are. In this exploration they may feel protected by the privacy of their room and by their own anonymity and that of the other participants. Often people engaged in cybersexual activity spend hours in front of the computer screen.

Cybersex may turn into an addiction when an individual uses cybersexual behavior to change his mood, either knowingly or unknowingly. (We use the male pronoun here advisedly; in our clinical experience and that of our colleagues, men appear to become more involved in cybersexual activity than women.) The characteristics of cybersexual addiction

are not very different from those of other addictions. While the person is engaged in a particular cybersex behavior, he may experience a "high," only to feel depressed when the activity finally stops. The cycle of denial and isolation is also operative; addicts may try to stop their behavior without significant results. Eventually, the behavior interferes with work, community life, and social life and takes a toll on the relationship with self and with God. Feelings of discomfort, guilt, and shame are associated with this behavior. Sometimes alcohol will be used to mask those feelings. In order to be satisfied, the person needs to spend more time at the computer, which often results in sleep deprivation and problems in maintaining appropriate time boundaries in general. Sometimes the reality of a person's relationship with the Web sinks in only when, for example, he cannot have immediate access to the Web because the phone line is down and thus discovers how dependent he has become on that instant access. For the Web-addicted person, virtual reality has become reality.

It is common to see a progression in the development of different forms of addiction, and cybersexual addiction is no exception. Cybersexual addiction might start with a person looking at some pornographic material that is available free of charge and involves no interaction with another person. It might progress to that individual's paying to get access to pornographic sites, creating a profile, and interacting with another person via e-mail. A next step might be "connecting" with another person through instant communication about sexual activity. Then he might engage in phone sex, and finally might actually meet with another cybersex participant to have a sexual encounter. Cybersexual activity can thus evolve into a real-life activity, which in turn can progress to compulsive sexual acting out, with all its dangers.

AREAS OF CONCERN

Cybersexual activity among individuals in religious life has increasingly become a reality over the past few years. Formators, spiritual directors, and superiors voice their awareness of this reality and often express uncertainty and anxiety regarding the meaning of this activity and how best to respond to it. On the basis of our clinical experience with individuals struggling with cybersexual activity, we have identified several primary areas of concern.

Cybersexual activity fosters a voyeuristic attitude regarding sexuality—something the mass media already tend to do excessively. This voyeuristic perspective moves individuals farther and farther away from the relational piece that is essential to healthy sexuality.

Cybersexual activity promotes a fragmented experience of sexuality—one focused on body parts or on a piecemeal experience of another person rather than on an interaction with a whole human being. In our clinical work, for example, we have repeatedly encountered individuals whose sexual interests have become focused exclusively, sometimes obsessively, on discrete body parts, items of clothing, or specific behaviors (such objects of focus, in some cases, would fall under the rubric of fetishes). Those individuals “saw” others primarily or exclusively in terms of the objects of focus and would spend extended periods of time online seeking out the objects of interest. Only through intensive therapeutic work were they able to move into a more integrated experience of their own and others’ sexuality.

Cybersexual activity isolates a person and his sexuality. It generally involves no direct exchange, objective feedback, or opportunity for processing responses, reactions, and feelings as they arise. This is developmentally unhealthy, particularly because our society is already highly individualistic and isolating. The challenge in such a culture is precisely to not become even more isolated. All growth, maturation, and integration happen in the crucible of relationship with friends, loved ones, peers, formators, mentors, therapists, spiritual directors, and others—not in the isolation of one’s own thoughts and fantasies. Given that many individuals enter formation (or are well along in religious life) and still have considerable personal psychosexual work to do, involvement with cybersexual activity is highly counterproductive, as it robs individuals of the conditions necessary for growth and integration.

Cybersexual activity isolates a person from social contact with peers. This is especially problematic for individuals who, for various reasons, including personality characteristics, poor communication skills, anxiety, and fears, find it a challenge to socialize with others and to be in a group. Sometimes such individuals can end up spending hours each day in cybersexual activity, thereby occupying their free time in a way that requires no effort at genuine relating. This pattern of activity makes them unlikely to strengthen their skills for socializing and building intimacy and significantly reduces the possibility of their witnessing to the value of true community living.

Cybersexual activity risks gradually numbing individuals’ sensitivity to what is sexually appropriate or problematic and dulling their conscience and consciousness around issues of sexuality and relationality. This then leaves them less and less able to respond appropriately to their own and others’ sexual and relational situations, including those occurring in pastoral circumstances.

Cybersexual activity implicitly and explicitly creates and sustains a market for pornography of all kinds, including child pornography, and for the serious exploitation and dangers this involves. Obviously, this constitutes a serious counterwitness to gospel values and to social justice.

Cybersexual activity by religious and clergy places their communities or dioceses in a vulnerable position ethically, since the use of pornographic and other problematic websites can be traced.

Besides the concerns specifically related to cybersexual addiction, we are also concerned about how excessive computer use affects our physical and emotional health in general. Spending hours online often means sacrificing exercise, proper nutrition, and sleep, and can contribute to general neglect of self-care. It can also mean giving insufficient attention to other areas of our life, including involvement in the community, prayer, reflection, spiritual reading, pastoral work, and relationships with other people.

INDIVIDUALS AT RISK

In our clinical work, we have observed several common characteristics of individuals in religious life and among the clergy who are involved in significant cybersexual activity. It is important to note that these characteristics are not necessarily different from the well-studied and documented characteristics of individuals who are at risk for, or already involved in, general sexual addiction. It appears that the primary difference is simply the choice of addictive object or activity. Before we list some of the characteristics, we want to emphasize that we are not saying that any of the following characteristics cause cybersexual activity. We are merely suggesting that people with these characteristics may be more at risk for getting involved with cybersex than people without these characteristics.

- Poor relational and intimacy skills; awkwardness with peers (especially, but not only, in highly introverted individuals). A tendency to use the Internet and cybersexual activity to avoid the discomfort of attempting to socialize with peers, or to “connect” with others in a “safe” way, through the Internet—which, of course, only fosters an illusion of actual connection.
- History of unresolved sexual difficulties, including incomplete integration of sexual identity and of any history of sexual trauma.
- Some degree of depression or dysthymia (low-grade, longstanding feelings of depression, low energy, some anxiety). The subjective experience of negative feelings and depleted energy may make it difficult for some individuals to be able to connect

effectively with others and may lead them to seek diversion, stimulation, and relief from their negative state in cybersexual activity.

- Impoverished spiritual life. Many individuals struggling with cybersexual activity or addiction are experiencing some degree of distancing, even alienation from God, due to an inadequate experience of intimacy with God, often resulting from poorly developed relational skills.

In summary, the Internet can be used in such a way that it allows individuals to create their own online fantasy world, which can become a protective cocoon, especially in a world that bombards us with choices and decisions. Increasingly, individuals cope by retreating into virtual reality and thus not dealing with actual reality, and especially not with the challenges of relating to others in our increasingly fragmented society. As stated at the beginning of this article, the current preponderance of electronic means of communication has, in certain ways, improved communication and greatly facilitated the exchange of information. However, it has also, in many cases, served as an outlet for people with markedly impoverished social skills and thus contributed to their increased difficulty relating in the real world, with real people and their real issues.

We would like to extend the following invitations to those having to address cybersexual issues in the context of priesthood and religious life, particularly in formation settings:

- Become aware of individuals who might be vulnerable to involvement in cybersexual activity, especially in times of stress. This underscores the need for thorough evaluation of candidates seeking admission to religious life or seminary, especially in the areas of relational skills and sexuality.
- Address cybersexual activity in workshops, discussions, and other educational events concerning psychosexual development and healthy sexuality, and create opportunities for candidates to talk about the issue, conveying to them that it is a widespread problem and that help is available for those struggling with it. Since we know that it is important, especially for individuals in formation, to be able to talk about sexuality with a trusted person, it could be helpful to routinely (and sensitively) ask individuals about their patterns of Internet use, including cybersexual activity. Of course, on the one hand formators need to be discreet and respectful of individuals' process of

growth and integration, but on the other hand they need to be comfortable asking students how they are handling celibate living in general and also how they are managing their use of the Internet.

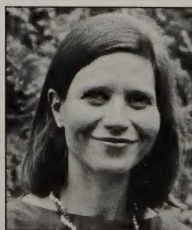
- Encourage some accountability around community time and social time; reduce opportunities for individuals to isolate at the computer.
- Place computers in a public or open space (for example, a library or study space), where individuals can study or work quietly as needed, but where they are likely to be deterred from visiting inappropriate websites. One priest working on recovery from cyberaddiction deliberately placed his computer in a room with large glass windows onto the main hallway of the building, so that others walking by could see what was on his screen. He found this arrangement very helpful to his recovery.

RECOMMENDED READING

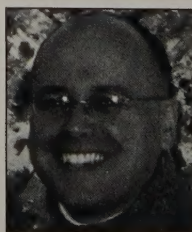
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René J. Molenkamp, Ph.D., is president of the Alexander Institute for psychotherapy and consultation in Washington, D.C.

A Vocation to What?

Catherine M. Harmer, M.M.S., Ph.D.

Recently, I had a conversation with a vocation promoter from another congregation—a congregation of sisters whose American province is growing smaller and older. The group has done a phenomenal job of empowering laity in their various ministries and especially in their institutional works. The future of the ministries is not in doubt because of the dedicated laity who are in place and who are diligently training their own next generation. The vocation promoter repeated something to me that I have been saying for years: “It is not a question of numbers.” She had recently attended a meeting at which the emphasis was on numbers and the importance of increasing them. She and I talked about the historical realities, one of which is that religious life in the past has been characterized by small numbers of congregations and small numbers within each group. Religious have accomplished their ministries through the involvement of others, not by being self-sufficient.

The myth that many present-day religious still harbor is that there are very large communities able to staff many institutions, at least in the professional roles, totally with their own members. The grammar school I attended seemed to bear out that myth—the teaching staff consisted of twenty-six sisters and one laywoman. The myth is of fairly recent birth and

death. Granted, at certain points in our history there have been large growths in the membership of religious congregations. In a 1972 book titled *Vie et mort des ordres religieux* (*Life and Death of Religious Orders*), Raymond Hostie traces the very interesting increases and decreases in numbers, highlighting the “blips” on the screen of history. He notes that the sudden increases were related to serious social problems or changes. I would argue that the blip in the twentieth century was related to the two major wars and the depression that occurred in the first half of that century. Those events led to a large increase in the numbers of religious.

By the early 1960s the numbers began to decline, partly because of the changes in religious life following Vatican Council II—but I suspect it would have happened in any case. What was different during the late sixties and through part of the seventies was not simply the increase in the numbers leaving, but the decline in the numbers entering. This was also a time of increasing lay involvement in many of the institutional works of the church and of religious communities. It is tempting to see the growing role of the laity as a result of the decline in religious vocations. Rather, I would suggest, it was the result of greater education of the laity and of the many new movements for involving laity as

more than dues-paying observers of church life and work.

When two such paths interconnect—the decline of religious in the institutions and the increase in lay involvement—one might see the hand of God at work. I have often asked religious, in schools and in hospitals especially, whether or not they would have opened the higher levels of administration to laity if there had been enough sisters to fill the slots. Many agree, reluctantly, that they would have been slower to open the door to lay involvement if they had had enough sisters.

However, religious life is more than institutional involvements. It is more than an inexpensive workforce. Some religious who are continuing to invite others to join them in the life may be concentrating on filling slots or carrying on their ministries themselves. Religious life, aside from the ministries but also in relation to them, has a reality that is distinct and true in itself.

Religious are involved increasingly in new ministries—ones that the laity at present are unprepared to enter or are blocked from entering by poor salaries. These new ministries, like the schools and hospitals of the past, are often on the cutting edge of church and world interests, ranging from ministries to homeless people, battered women, and victims of AIDS and other diseases to involvement in battles for a greater level of social justice on behalf of people everywhere. Historically, religious communities have pioneered new ministries and outreach to groups not previously served. Also, we know from history that religious, especially women, often have had to fight to do the service they felt they were called upon to provide.

Whether religious communities in our lifetime will have large numbers or entrance classes in the double digits is not the real issue. Religious life has a long history, going back to the apostolic age. It has been through numerous “near-death experiences,” has been outlawed in some countries, has grown small, and then has spread again. It exists at God’s will, not at ours.

A sister once asked me if I believed that religious life has a future. My answer: I believe completely and unreservedly that it does. What I do not believe is that it has much, if anything, to do with numbers. It has to do with people being willing to be dedicated to the work of God, to the people of God, and to their needs. A few years ago I visited a hospital in Pakistan at which I had worked. Our order had since turned the hospital over to the government and people of Pakistan. To say I did not feel a nostalgic sadness would be untrue. However, I was exhilarated to see what the people had done with the hospital—how it

had grown and, with government support, had been able to develop programs and departments that our religious community had not been able to afford. Our foundress’ picture was still hanging in the lobby, along with a plaque bearing the names of all the sisters who had served in the hospital and a statement of the gratitude of the people of Pakistan for the gift of the hospital. Many of the people we had trained were still working there and took me on a tour, showing me with pride what had been done.

It may be that religious life will exist on a smaller scale in the foreseeable future. The question, then, is how the smaller numbers will live and work for God and the people. We are meant to be the leaven, the yeast, not the flour. Any baker knows how small an amount of yeast is needed to make a lot of bread.

THE INVITATION TO OTHERS

The focus of my conversation with the vocation promoter was twofold. First, we were both saying yes to a future for religious life and affirming our willingness to continue to invite women and men into that future. Second, we were examining the nature of our invitation to others, and what we are saying about the religious life to which we are inviting them.

When I am invited to meetings, which happens frequently, I ask about the agenda. When I am invited to a party, I usually ask about its focus and how many people are coming. I ask because I don’t want to get to a meeting and discover that I am not interested in the content at all; nor do I want to go to a party if it will be a noisy mob scene at which conversation is difficult. What is especially annoying to me is discovering, upon arrival at a meeting or a party, that it is quite different from what I was led to believe. If I am so selective about meetings and parties, I am even more selective about what I do with my life.

Too often, when I look at vocation promotion literature, I find myself wondering if what is being presented is really true to what is being lived. Most religious communities, in the decades since early renewal, have refocused their ministries, their lifestyle, their spiritual practices, and their approach to community. It is not my intent to focus on what is being said that I find questionable; I simply want to emphasize that we need to be clear about what we put in our invitation.

I worked with one of our European vocation promoters a number of years ago. Her community’s literature focused heavily on the strengths and beauties of community living. Their formation followed the same pattern, with a lot of group activity and group functioning, along with what I call “warm cuddlies.”

When I questioned the vocation promoter, she talked about the great need in her country for a sense of community among young people yearning for the warmth they no longer found in family, church, or professional life. Her literature addressed that need.

Two things worried me. One was that we were attracting a number of needy, possibly emotionally dependent women to religious life. The other was that we were not presenting a picture that focused on our mission, ministry, and the challenges of religious life today. As we talked, I remembered when I first saw a brochure from our vocation department when I was a high-school student. It spoke of women dedicated to the healing arts in the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. I felt challenged, excited, and frankly a bit overwhelmed. The next day I wrote for information. That brochure said nothing about warm, friendly communities; it said a lot about a demanding life of reaching out to others and doing that with other dedicated women.

CRAFTING THE INVITATION

In putting out our invitation for others to join us, I think it is essential that we convey the core of who we are and why we exist, in both general and specific ways. There are some risks involved. If our picture of ourselves does not attract others, we may need to look at who we are and what we are doing. It may be that our life is unusually demanding, which would tell me that we need to contact women and men who want such a life. If our life is too comfortable, we may need to look at ourselves to see how and when we lost the challenging and demanding elements. I am not sure that a comfortable life would have been very attractive to me when I looked at that brochure. I was a bit frightened by the challenge but decided I wanted to try.

There are four areas in which I think we need to focus vocational promotion that is true, valid, challenging, and inviting. These areas are mission, identity, community, and spirituality.

Mission. Often the emphasis of vocational literature is on the ministries in which we are involved. That is fine in a way, but we need to establish the focus within which those ministries take place. The mission is the broad reason behind who we are and what we focus on as of the essence of our lives. For religious this mission has to be a piece of the mission of Jesus Christ. The ministries are the ways we act, work, and struggle to achieve the goals of the mission. Too often we reverse the priorities of these two realities.

Going back for a moment to that vocation litera-

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ture I found as a student: It showed a picture of a sister doctor. The text said that Medical Mission Sisters worked as doctors, nurses, pharmacists, technicians, and the like in hospitals and clinics in Africa, India, and other places. That brochure identified the ministries of the group, which was fine because I was interested in both medicine and missions. However, inside there was a picture of the Good Samaritan, and some text about how Jesus was concerned for the poor and the sick of the world. I am not sure that the woman who wrote that brochure was separating mission and ministries, but she hit the two important things for me, because I had been thinking a lot about a religious vocation, and I had been fighting it until I saw that description.

In the years after Vatican II, when many communities were reevaluating their works and their way of life, a third element entered into our thoughts. We tried to be clear on our mission as a part of the mission of Jesus (Luke 4:16–22), and we evaluated our ministries in terms of the mission. However, in addressing the ministry side of the question, we began to get caught up not just in the ministries but also in their institutional base. Medical Mission Sisters looked at the healing Jesus and the ministries to the poor and the sick, but like many other communities, we also got caught up in questions about specific hospitals. It was not easy to go through that process. Like most communities, we had to be very clear that we were talking about mission and ministry, not about maintaining our hold on particular institutions.

Our vocation literature was relatively easy to develop in the days when we could talk of hospitals in Ghana and India, and clinics in the Philippines and Viet Nam. Medical Mission Sisters are still in many of the same countries, but we find ourselves doing different ministries as a part of the healing presence of Jesus. Every community needs to be sure that its ministries do in fact support the mission. Just as important, we need to be sure that our vocation literature accurately describes those ministries and what it means to serve in them. Some images are not so "romantic" as that of the sister doctor with a stethoscope around her neck, or the sister surgeon in the operating room.

I often find that on the one hand, vocation ads give a general sense of being a religious without giving a clear depiction of the specific mission and ministries, and on the other hand, they overemphasize the work done. We need to resolve these problems.

Identity. Who religious are today is increasingly important and, at the same time, more difficult to name or describe. That we are people of the church is clear, but what is often not so clear is how we define and understand the word *church*. If we see it as "people of God," that is clear but also very broad. All the baptized are part of that people, but religious have claimed a special role that has to do with making the work of God—the call—very focused. The primary call for religious is to serve God and the people of God in a special way. It is to put the service of God and the people of God to the fore—to place them centrally in our life and our emphasis.

Community. As a child and young adult, I had some sense of what it meant to be in a community of sisters. I saw the sisters in our parish at the school and the church, but did not see them in their "community" context because the convent was closed to us. Yet what I did see of the sisters gave me at least some intuition that there was something really good about being with other people who were concerned about and dedicated to the same things. I did not have the terminology then, but realized when I acquired the correct words that it was community—a group of people living together, with a very clear sense of what community meant. At that time, and during my early years in my own order, community had to do with being communal—that is, living together, working together, being supportive of one another, sharing goals (even though we did not originally talk in such terms). When I encountered difficulties in understanding what was going on in my experience of religious life, I usually was struggling with varied understandings of what community re-

ally meant. At times it was connected to a uniformity of lifestyle, prayer systems, and work aspects.

Later, as we moved through Vatican II and religious writers delved more deeply into the concepts behind community, we all became increasingly conscious that community is related to unity, to communion, more than to uniformity, which had been a large if unspoken emphasis in my early years in religious life. It is not totally insignificant that so much of the change in religious life was taking place simultaneously with a rediscovery of community in many areas of life both within and outside of church venues. The sixties were a time of great hunger for and development of community as a deeper and richer way of relating in many areas of life. Religious were caught up in the same movements, which led to both a deeper valuing of the concept of community and some unrealistic ideas and hopes about that concept and its realization. A friend once reminded me that community is more than just the "warm cuddlies."

Community in religious life today is lived in a wide variety of ways and is more connected to the spirit underlying the concept than to the sixties' experiences of togetherness. Today community is lived more in terms of union and unity, of being concerned and caring about others, especially in their ministries. In its best expression, community is a deep and firm reality that connects us to commitment to mission, to church in its broadest sense, and to one another in the diversity of life today. Most, if not all, of the elements that were more truly uniformity than unity have dropped into disuse. For many religious women, certain elements of the community of the past—regular times of prayer, meals and recreation together—are now sometimes rather than always experiences. When I see vocation brochures that show pictures or give descriptions of community members doing everything together most of the time, I feel a sense of unreality, and also a fear that we are inviting people into a thing of the past. Many religious do still have meals together and prayer in common, but for most of us, these are no longer the fixed, daily practices that they were in our early years. The very demands of mission and ministry make those forms of togetherness cherished but not daily experiences.

What is more important is the underlying value of community. What is true of community today is that it is still deeply treasured but also much more diverse than in the past. It is the spirit of community that is valued because we no longer have the automatic uniformity of schedules, processes, and experiences. To live communally now requires much adapting, much planning, and a commitment to the deeper values that underpin true community in its

modern form. We need to invite people to that reality rather than to a memory of the past.

A misrepresentation of a community can become a vision that attracts people who are very fragile in the area of personal needs. It can speak particularly to people who have had poor family experiences and who have a fantasy of the “good family” they hope to find in religious life. There is a profoundly true and strong element to community life today among religious, but it is not the “togetherness” of the family television shows of the sixties.

Spirituality. This is an area in which I believe we need to do more in the sense of showing, insofar as is possible, the true reality of the religious life. If I have any regret about my early days in religious life, it is that we seemed to have confused spiritual exercises with spirituality. As a community, we took part in set “spiritual exercises,” some of which were daily, others weekly, and others monthly or annually. We said certain prayers daily (Prime, Compline, meditation, Rosary, visit to the Blessed Sacrament), others weekly or monthly (Holy Hour, Recollection Day), and went on an annual retreat. For the most part these were communal experiences that we did together at the same time, with the schedules much the same around the world.

At some time in our lives many of us religious found ourselves wondering if there was not something else that we were missing. The books on spirituality seemed to point to something more, or at least to something different. Many congregations experienced a fear about “contemplation,” connected to a concern about “mysticism” and what it might actually mean. We were of two minds about it: we honored the concept and we feared the reality. Once, as a young professed religious, I took several books to my local superior to ask permission to read them: a book by G. K. Chesterton, a novel, and a book by a French mystic. The only one my superior was concerned about was the one by the mystic, until I explained that I wanted to read it to recoup my French, which I had not used for several years and would be studying in school that year. Her relief would have been comical if I had been old enough to see the humor.

I believe that spirituality today is a much more alive and unique reality for many religious sisters than it was in the past. Retreats now are much more likely to be individual, even directed, rather than for

large groups listening to lectures and reading quietly. Prayer is more than simply the group expressions of the past. For many women religious, their life of prayer is far more important now, even if it does not use the same quantity of time. What is different now is the quality of the prayer and its connection to the whole of life. The prayer of religious today tends to be much more ecclesial in the true sense of praying with and in the church.

When we invite others to join us in religious life, in our mission and ministries, it is important that we make the invitation both attractive and true. There can be no value in depicting a life that is not ours. One vocation promoter told me that it is important to know what people are looking for and to focus on that. In a sense she is right—as long as what people are looking for is actually found in our communities. Vocation work takes great courage and perseverance. I have great admiration for those who commit themselves to it so wholeheartedly. I firmly believe that we do not have to be fearful of the truth, especially not the truth of who we are. People are so different: one person may be turned off by pictures of religious being hauled off to jail for demonstrating against nuclear stockpiles, whereas another might be challenged by the same image to live a more consequent life, even if not in a religious congregation. We need to be sure that what people see in our invitation is also what we are willing to give to those who knock on our doors. To do less would be untruthful to the caller and unfaithful to our call as religious.

RECOMMENDED READING

Harmer, C. *Religious Life in the 21st Century: A Contemporary Journey into Canaan*. Mystic, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 1995.

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Safe Touch in Ministry

Allan Schnarr, Ph.D.

Every human being is a vessel of divinity, worthy of the reverence given to the presence of God. It is my belief, nonetheless, that everyone's sacred space has been violated. Intentionally or not, others have trespassed uninvited, with looks, with words, with actions, or with touch. Currently, we call such intrusions abuse. The recent climate of openness in breaking the silence about such desecrations seems necessary if human dignity is to be protected and, in many cases, restored. Nonetheless, the prevalence and sensationalism of stories of abuse have stirred fear in the loving hearts of many in ministry. This became evident to me in a conversation I had as a tutor to a student in the Christian Institute for the Study of Human Sexuality. The student was a caring minister who had become concerned about keeping too much of a distance from people. Our conversation led me to develop the following guidelines for anyone concerned about whether, when, where, and how to touch.

GUIDELINES FOR SAFE TOUCH

Person. Who is this person? Man, woman, boy, girl? How old is he or she? What is his or her cultural background? What is her or his station in life? What is his or her sexual orientation (if known)?

Relationship. What is my relationship to this person? Am I in a professional or personal relationship? If a combination of the two, what would be the percentage of each? Do I have a position that gives me some power over this person? Does this person depend on me for something? How free would this person be to tell me if he or she were uncomfortable with my touch? How long have we known each other? How much trust is there between us?

Situation. Are we in a public or private setting? Are there others present? Is the situation professional, social, or some combination of the two?

Feelings. What are my personal feelings toward this person, in general and especially at the moment of the touch? How conscious am I of my feelings in relation to this person? How willing am I to explore them?

Intent. What is my intention in touching this person? What is it that I want to communicate? Am I comforting someone in pain? Am I celebrating with someone in joy? Am I expressing affection? Is this a sexual invitation? Am I looking for something in return? Am I demonstrating my power to do as I please with this person?

Manner. What kind of touch am I contemplating, or have I engaged in? Is it a hug? An embrace? An arm around someone's shoulder? A pat on the back? Holding someone's hand? Stroking someone's cheek? Kissing the cheek? Lightly kissing the lips? Intensely kissing the lips? Prolonged holding?

Meaning. What is the probable meaning of the touch to this person? Given all of the above, is he or she likely to get the message that I intend to communicate with my touch? How attentive am I to the feelings and choices of this person? What happens in the relationship as a consequence of the touch?

Discomfort. How honest am I willing to be with myself about my discomfort regarding touching this person? How much inner tension do I have about touching (or not doing so)? How cavalier am I allowing myself to be? In what ways might I be overly sensitive? What is my history with touch? Have I been well loved? Deprived? Violated? How willing am I to explore all the above factors? How much am I caught by the need for secrecy? With whom would I be willing to accept the valuable challenge of bringing all this into the light by talking about it?

Avoidance. Am I avoiding touch because of the fear of scandal or accusation? How realistic is this fear? What is the message that I convey through my lack of touch? How responsible am I willing to be for the messages that my behavior conveys? How does my lack of touch compromise the integrity of my loving others? How much do I really care? How courageous am I willing to be?

COMMUNICATING LOVE

Perhaps God became human in the person of Jesus to awaken us to the divinity in our bodies. Jesus was very much a flesh-and-blood human being. His ministry consisted of being physically present and responsive to others. He ate, drank, laughed, cried, walked, danced, and talked with his companions. Jesus touched people. He understood that the word had to become flesh, that bodies had to experience communion. His message to his followers was simple: Love one another as I have loved you. We who follow him are not disembodied spirits tossing divine truths across the emptiness between us. We are the mystical body of Christ in the ways that we allow our bodies to commune. Our challenge is to learn how to be physically interactive in ways that communicate love.

As embodied spirits, we are complex beings. The subtleties with which our bodies communicate are infinitely diverse. The challenge to be clear in what is communicated is a relational one. Both parties to the exchange are involved in creating the meaning of what passes between them. There is so much to learn. Every relationship at every moment is the teacher. Those who are open to love listen to the teacher. In this way they continue to grow in their ability to embody their beliefs. They recognize that growing in love is the work of a lifetime.



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Approaches to Transformation

Len Sperry, M.D., Ph.D.

Today an increasing number of adults are exploring spirituality and seeking to integrate the spiritual dimension in their lives. Why? Many explanations are given, but one seems particularly compelling. Priest and social critic Ronald Rolheiser contends that contemporary culture has deeply wounded Americans. He points to narcissism, pragmatism, and unbridled restlessness as the wounding forces. By cultivating individualism, American culture breeds self-preoccupation with self-fulfillment and narcissism, which are incompatible with a communal perspective. Pragmatism is reflected in our striving for efficiency, achievement, and practicality, whereas authentic spiritual living is impractical and inefficient. Furthermore, American culture instills an unbridled restlessness in us, such that we constantly crave diversion and excitement, which further desensitize us to our spiritual core. The result is that many people are seeking to get back in touch with their spiritual core, convinced that a life dominated by self-preoccupation, pragmatism, and agitation is no way to live. Not surprisingly, many individuals are looking to spiritual direction and pastoral counseling for advice on how to reverse these cultural influences. A reasonable question is, Can pastoral counseling and spiritual direction, as currently conceptualized and practiced, adequately respond to this

challenge? This article addresses the question by reviewing the value and utility of the current practice and theories of both specialties and proposing a needed revisioning.

CASE EXAMPLE

Mary Louise Enders has been the director of religious education at a mid-size urban parish for nine years. She is married, with three children and four grandchildren. Her youngest child recently left home for college, and Mary now feels she has "a little more time to be serious about my spiritual life." This is her first experience with spiritual direction, and she is eager to "make up for lost time." As coordinator of the parish's religious education programs, she has often recommended spiritual direction to those completing the program, and now thinks it is time to abide by her own advice. She reports that her husband of twenty-six years is supportive of her decision, just as he was when she went back to school for a master's degree in religious education. For the past several years her religious practices have included daily formula prayer, the rosary, occasional scripture reading (usually related to her teaching responsibilities), and daily mass. She once tried to meditate but gave it up after about a week or

so. She describes her image of God as “like a caring grandmother.”

She indicates that she has generally been blessed with excellent health. After the birth of her third child she received short-term treatment (consisting of medication and counseling) for postpartum depression; otherwise, she reports no personal or family history of treatment related to mental health or substance abuse. Mary Louise reports that she has found her roles as mother, wife, and pastoral minister to be gratifying, though occasionally challenging.

When asked to elaborate on being challenged, she mentions the newly assigned pastor, who “seems to be running a reign of terror” over the parish staff. It seems that following the untimely death of the previous pastor a year ago, the pastorate was assigned to a priest who had been on a study leave in Rome. Soon after arriving at his new assignment, he fired the school principal of eleven years for “insubordination.” Recently, he dismissed two of Mary Louise’s RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) staff because they apparently questioned a comment he made. She was quite upset about this; besides being her best catechists, they also happen to be close personal friends of hers. When she tried to talk to the pastor about reinstating the two, he told her, “Never question my judgment if you want to stay here.” Three weeks ago Mary Louise stated that one of her volunteer teachers had complained that the priest had been “hitting on [her] for a while now, and yesterday touched [her] indecently.” The volunteer was a 38-year-old, never-married woman who was somewhat shy and who spent most of her free time involved in parish activities. She wanted to know what Jane would do about it. Jane was not sure what she might do, if anything, particularly because she felt so intimidated by the pastor and really didn’t want to lose her job. Although Jane recognizes that sexual abuse may be present and that she probably has some moral responsibility because the complaint involves one of her teachers, she has not directly asked that the matter be a focus of her spiritual direction. Her personality appears to be that of a pleaser and reconciler, and not surprisingly, she has gone silently about her duties for the past three weeks.

From a psychospiritual perspective, Mary Louise would be considered a good candidate for spiritual direction. She appears to be a reasonably mature individual, psychologically and spiritually, with a good social support system, no obvious history of religious or spiritual abuse or baggage, appropriate motivation, and the commitment to embark on a deeper spiritual journey. Her commitment to her current spiritual practices and her positive image of God are additional strengths. Her expectation of spiritual di-

rection is that it will deepen her prayer life and help her to deal better with her job, particularly the aspects involving her pastor.

Finally, it should be noted that in terms of the dynamics of self-surrender and autonomy, Mary Louise appears to manifest more capacity to subordinate her needs and wants than to act independently and assertively. Accordingly, reasonable goals of spiritual direction would be to deepen her prayer life and to focus on increasing her autonomy (e.g., becoming more assertive with her pastor in general, excluding the case of alleged sexual impropriety).

THE NEED FOR REVISIONING

Is this psychospiritual formulation and plan for the course of spiritual direction responsive to Mary Louise’s needs and expectations? While at first glance it may appear to be responsive, on closer examination it is probably not. Because Mary Louise did not specifically ask that the matter of the alleged sexual impropriety be a focus, the spiritual director did not make it a focus of their work together. That is because many training programs and supervisors advocate the position that matters are not to be addressed unless the client initiates them. And while there may be a few exceptions (e.g., a threat to seriously harm another, or pedophilia), many spiritual directors and pastoral counselors would adhere to that practice guideline. The question that probably is not being addressed is, Can Mary Louise become more transformed if she fails to act courageously when she probably should?

Unfortunately, the current practice of spiritual direction and pastoral counseling is only partially responsive to the expectations of many clients. There are several reasons for this situation, including an uncritical reliance on psychological constructs and methods, particularly those that promote individualism; reliance on reductionistic models and theories underlying the practice of both spiritual direction and pastoral counseling; and training and supervision that are similarly reductionistic. It should not be too surprising that practice patterns of spiritual directors and pastoral counselors are likewise reductionistic. Thus, it appears that a more holistic and integrative model is needed.

This article is an initial effort at revisioning the theory and practice of spiritual direction and pastoral counseling. Revisioning is the process of critically re-viewing a phenomenon, such as a theory or a pattern of practice. Distinct from identifying a new vision that is an endpoint (e.g., proposing a new theory), revisioning is an intermediate activity. A basic contention of this article is that current theories are

so reductionistic and clinically limited that efforts to establish a foundational theory are simply premature at this time. Nevertheless, it is both reasonable and possible to offer basic methodological guidelines and a conceptual map for framing a holistic and integrative theory for the practice of spiritual direction and pastoral counseling.

How are pastoral counseling and spiritual direction being defined here? Although separate realities in practice, they share a number of commonalities and overlap in many ways. "The best of contemporary pastoral counseling includes the concerns of spiritual direction within it," according to Walter Conn, author of *The Desiring Self: Rooting Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction in Self-Transcendence*. Among other things, both share the goal of transformation. Where they may differ is in focus. Whereas pastoral counseling tends to focus more on particular problems and concerns, spiritual direction tends to focus more on ongoing development.

STARTING POINT: HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Ideally, clients' experience (i.e., needs and expectations) is the starting point for the theory and practice of pastoral counseling and spiritual direction. But the reality is that the starting point is theory rather than experience. Using experience as the starting point could presumably lead to the development of different foundational models and theories, as well as new clinical applications.

What are the needs, concerns, and expectations of prospective and ongoing clients for pastoral counseling and spiritual direction? The following list contains twenty-one common concerns, classified in five categories. Those in categories I and II reflect the spiritual domain of life, those in category III reflect the moral domain, and those in categories IV and V reflect the psychological domain.

- I. relationship with God
 - prayer; prayer problems
 - spiritual practices
 - discernment involving spiritual experiences
 - spiritual emergencies (e.g., crisis of faith)
- II. meaning and purpose of life
 - discernment involving major decisions
 - self-development; growth in virtue
- III. moral issues regarding self (e.g., guilt over loss of temper)
 - moral issues regarding relationship (e.g., extra-marital affair)
 - moral issues regarding social situations (e.g., work-related moral dilemma)

- IV. losses and/or grieving
 - relational conflicts
 - imbalances: work, family, self
 - work/school problems
 - failed expectations
 - mild to moderate symptoms/impairment
- V. moderate to severe symptoms/impairment
 - characterological/personality disorders
 - addictions
 - sequelae of early-life trauma

Concerns listed in category I are usually associated with spiritual direction (e.g., relationship with God and spiritual practices), while those listed in category IV are usually associated with pastoral counseling (e.g., problems of daily living, relational conflicts and issues). Concerns in category V are typically considered the province of psychotherapy and psychiatry. That does not mean that a spiritual director would avoid these symptoms or concerns. Rather than attempting to process them psychotherapeutically, the spiritual director might ask "Where is God for you in this situation?" to assist the client in reflecting on the spiritual dimension of the symptoms or condition.

But what about category III concerns—moral and ethical issues? In the past the pastoral care and counseling function was typically provided by ordained ministers, who routinely dealt with moral concerns. They offered guidance to individuals who were confused about moral choices or guided those who had violated established Christian norms through a process of forgiveness and restoration to the community. Practically speaking, there was no separation between pastoral counseling and ethics. Today, however, contemporary pastoral counselors, as well as secular psychotherapists, appear to be reluctant or unwilling to process moral and ethical issues with clients. This has resulted in a split between pastoral counseling and the moral domain.

There are many reasons for the pastoral counselor's reluctance to deal with a client's moral and ethical issues. Prominent among these are a culture of pluralism and the pervasiveness of the psychodynamic perspective in pastoral counseling. In a pluralistic society, ethical statements are more likely to be understood as personal opinions rather than as the consensus of a community. A widespread acceptance of pluralism has effected dramatic changes in patterns of behavior found acceptable by the general population, to whom pastoral care is directed. Furthermore, the influence of psychoanalysis and psychodynamic thinking has reshaped pastoral care and pastoral counseling from moral guidance into self-exploration and self-discovery. From the psychodynamic perspective, discussing ethical concerns in counseling

was perceived as a moralistic assault to the embattled ego and thought to foster neuroses. The end result was that ethics became reserved for preaching and teaching, while pastoral care focused on compassion and empathy to help individuals search their own experience, resolve their own conflicts, and decide on their own norms.

Since many individuals approach ministry personnel and pastoral counselors for help in deciding what is right, best, or appropriate in their lives, the challenge is to balance moral guidance with compassion and empathy. Don Browning notes that entering "into sensitive moral inquiry with troubled and confused individuals without becoming moralistic is the major technical and methodological task for training in pastoral care in the future."

The situation is rather similar in spiritual direction. Prior to Vatican II most spiritual direction in Roman Catholicism was provided by priests. Not surprisingly, spiritual direction took on a sacramental character, and the discussion of one's daily life covered not only prayer and spiritual practices but also moral matters, since the spiritual director was often the director's confessor. One of the outgrowths of the Second Vatican Council is that spiritual direction became increasingly the domain of nonordained spiritual directors. As a result, spiritual direction and ethics became separated. And as spiritual direction became increasingly informed by psychology (particularly by the psychodynamic perspective) instead of by ethics and moral theology, the split between spiritual direction and ethics widened as it had in pastoral counseling.

DIMENSIONS OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Historically, human experience has been described in terms of several dimensions. Six dimensions of human experience are described in the works of Bernard Lonergan and Ken Wilber: social, moral, spiritual, somatic, intellectual, and affective. These six dimensions are closely related to four basic domains of life: the moral, the psychological, the spiritual, and the transformational.

The *social dimension* refers to all the relationships in one's life: interpersonal, work, family, community, and peers. The *spiritual dimension* refers to the beliefs, affects, and behaviors associated with the basic spiritual hunger or desire for transformation that all individuals experience. It may or may not involve any formal affiliation with a religious tradition. The *moral dimension* refers to ethical thinking, decision making, and actions. The biological or *somatic dimension* refers to physiological processes and physical well-being. The *affective dimension* refers to af-

fects, feelings, and emotional states, as well as emotional functioning and well-being. The *intellectual dimension* refers to all cognitive ability, functioning, and capacities for critical reflection and thinking.

Of what relevance are these six dimensions for spiritual direction and pastoral counseling? Carolyn Gratton contends that those who practice spiritual direction and pastoral counseling are desperately "in need of an integrative theoretical framework as a foundation. . . . This framework would be multidisciplinary, inclusive of the full spectrum of the dimension of the human person and of [his or her] life field."

An integrative model of pastoral counseling and spiritual direction that meets Gratton's criteria will be described and illustrated. It is integrative in that it provides a critical correlation and synthesis of various psychological and theological constructs. It is multidisciplinary in that it draws upon the disciplines of spirituality, moral philosophy, systematic theology, moral theology, and personality theory and psychotherapy. In addition, it includes the psychological, spiritual, and moral domains of human experience. Finally, it emphasizes the process or journey of transformation and the dimensions of transformation. As such, it contrasts with the reductionistic theories and models that currently serve as the basis for the practice of spiritual direction and pastoral counseling, to which we now turn.

CURRENT THEORIES AND MODELS

Most current models and theories that underlie the practice of spiritual direction and pastoral counseling are largely influenced by psychological theory. Ironically, psychological theories in general are increasingly being criticized for promoting a culture of individualism and narcissism. While it is not possible to critically analyze all of these foundational theories and models, three prominent theories are briefly reviewed here: image of God theory, self-transcendence theory, and developmental stage theories and models. All have considerable face validity, which probably accounts for their popularity. However, each has some serious limitations as a theoretical foundation for the practice of spiritual direction and pastoral counseling.

Image of God Theory. An expanding research base has encouraged the development of various theories involving God representation or, as it is more commonly described, image of God. Ana Marie Rizzuto's clinical study of a series of patients is reported in her book *The Birth of the Living God*. Rizzuto contends that an individual's God represen-

tation reflects his or her images of parents or other early caretakers. Subsequent research has indicated that one's God image is predictive of marital functioning, political party affiliation, and voting preferences, among other things.

Leroy Howe, in his book *The Image of God: A Theology for Pastoral Care and Counseling*, has correlated a theology of the image of God with object relations theory. Similarly, Deborah Hunsinger, in *Theology and Pastoral Counseling*, has correlated Karl Barth's theology with the psychoanalytic perspective on God representation as the basis for practicing pastoral counseling. Both of these efforts have greatly extended this theory to clinical practice. Regrettably, because both theories focus only on the psychological and spiritual domains, they are somewhat limited and reductionistic.

Developmental Stage Theories and Models. Several developmental stage theories and models have been proposed to analyze the moral dimension (Kohlberg, Gilligan), the psychological/social dimensions (Erikson), and the religious/spiritual dimension (Fowler, Kegan). Joann Wolski Conn, in *Spirituality and Personal Maturity*, and Elizabeth Liebert, in *Changing Life Patterns: Adult Development in Spiritual Direction*, have utilized Robert Kegan's model of self-development and skillfully articulated and demonstrated its clinical utility in spiritual direction and pastoral counseling.

To date, none of these developmental theories and models have held up well to the increasing scrutiny of theological critics and psychological researchers. Both theoretical and praxis limitations have been noted. Furthermore, there is only marginal research support for the two most widely studied theories, those of Erikson and Kohlberg. Because these developmental theories or models principally address a single dimension of human experience, they are essentially reductionistic. Accordingly, they have limited value and utility as foundations for the practice of spiritual direction and pastoral counseling when viewed from the perspective of human experience (e.g., client concerns and expectations).

Self-Transcendence Theory. Walter Conn, in *The Desiring Self*, proposes a theory of self as the foundational basis for such counseling and direction. He defines self-transcendence as the "radial desire of the self for both autonomy and relationship, the dual desire to be a self and to reach out beyond the self to world, others, and God." It is a theory of a dipolar self, in which there is a self-as-subject and a self-as-object. This theory deftly integrates the seemingly contradictory themes of self-realization

and self-surrender. Another name for this dual desire is "relational autonomy," and Conn contends that the goal of both pastoral counseling and spiritual direction is to facilitate it.

While this theory is possibly the best-articulated foundational basis for pastoral counseling and spiritual direction, it is problematic because of its apparent reductionism. Conn's nearly exclusive focus on the spiritual and the psychological (i.e., affective and intellectual) dimensions of human experience effectively dismisses or at least subordinates the moral, somatic, and social dimensions. Furthermore, to assume that relational autonomy is the only goal of spiritual direction and pastoral counseling is similarly reductionistic. Finally, the major spiritual and religious traditions emphasize transformation—not only of self but also of the community—as the outcome of spiritual striving, rather than the much narrower primary focus on self-transcendence. Accordingly, transformation, rather than mere self-transcendence, is a more reasonable goal of spiritual direction and pastoral counseling. In addition, a more holistic formulation might be a tripolar self, in which self-in-community extends the dipolar self. Conn's theory specifies that two self-capacities, autonomy and self-surrender, are essential for self-transcendence. By comparison, the integrative model proposed in this article posits thirteen requisite self-capacities as essential for transformation. Finally, the clinical utility and practical applications of self-transcendence theory within spiritual direction and pastoral counseling have yet to be demonstrated.

Rather than proposing a developmental stage approach, a construct such as image of God, a theory of self-transcendence, or any theoretical entity or approach, this article proposes a more holistic and integrative model. This integrative model both acknowledges the value of these previously described theories and models and incorporates elements from some of them. It attempts to include all the dimensions of human experience and articulates them in terms of four taxonomies.

TAXONOMIES, MODELS, AND THEORIES

Establishing theories is a major focus of the process of intellectual inquiry. This process involves an orderly progression of the following levels of theory development: ordered observation, taxonomies, conceptual frameworks or models, and theoretical frameworks or theories. This article focuses primarily on the levels of taxonomy and conceptual frameworks or models.

A taxonomy is a way of classifying observations by means of certain attributes. For example, the description and classification of symptomatic distress

and impaired functioning for each diagnostic entity in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fourth edition (DSM-IV) is an example of a taxonomy. The value and viability of a taxonomy is determined by the extent to which it is comprehensive in ordering observation.

Models are simplified representations of a reality. They are means of specifying relationships among ordered observations (taxonomies) of ideas, concepts, or methods. The diagnostic system of DSM-IV is an example of a model of psychopathology. The value and viability of a model is determined by the extent to which it represents the relationships among taxonomies.

The next progression in the sequence is theory. Theory is defined as a means of explaining a wide set of observations and the relationships among those observations. The value and viability of a theory is determined by its adequacy of explanation. Unfortunately, there are few proposed theories that meet this test. For example, there are at least three hundred theories of psychotherapy, and each posits some explanation of how psychopathology originates and how it can be changed or cured. However, none of these theories has been scientifically validated. In fact, the DSM-IV is described as an atheoretical model of psychopathology. It remains a model based on taxonomies, since there is insufficient understanding of the etiology and pathogenesis of mental disorders to fashion a viable explanatory account or theory of psychopathology. Although there has been considerable scientific progress in recent years, it is not anticipated that a viable theory of psychopathology will be forthcoming for quite some time.

It appears that in their enthusiasm to become professional specialties, pastoral counseling and spiritual direction have short-circuited this sequence, with disastrous results. The sequence was subverted by jumping from making limited observations of human experience to positing models and theories or

importing them from other disciplines. A major consequence of this short-circuiting is that current theories and models are notably reductionistic and have limited clinical utility and viability.

CONCLUDING COMMENT

A critical revisioning of the practice of pastoral counseling and spiritual direction is clearly needed. New models for the practice of pastoral counseling must begin with human experience rather than the uncritical adoption of theories and models from other disciplines, including psychology. The fact that psychological theories—particularly theories of the self—have been increasingly criticized for being reductionistic and for promoting individualism and narcissism is both ironic and embarrassing, since a main reason individuals seek spiritual and pastoral guidance is to neutralize and reverse the cultural pulls of individualism and narcissism. A subsequent article will describe and illustrate an integrative model of spiritual direction and pastoral care that meets these criteria.

RECOMMENDED READING

- Rolheiser, R. *The Shattered Lantern: Rediscovering a Felt Presence of God*. New York, New York: Crossroads, 1995.
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Sound Body

James Torrens, S.J.

The Nude Man

for Beth Van Hoesen

Done with the classic volumes,
my eye turns to the ordinary.
Woman, an interested party,
has eaten these shapes in.
Surfaces sending back my look.
Flesh around lines of force,
poised, limber, angular.
Some in thick packing
as for heavywork. Dull,
glossy, all tints. The male
self-attentive, sitting
with his pouch and chin on palm
as in examination rooms,
or as in August, sweltering,
keyed down (quick to key up).
Woman, taking us all in,
with you my shape draws.

peak—after a good workout, say, or while dancing, or on a sparkling day. It's just that we forget pretty quickly.

Everything has to be working right for us to feel well. An old Scholastic adage comes to mind: *Bonum ex integra causa, malum e quocumque defectu* (It's good when everything's working right; it's bad with the least defect). Well-being turns to misery with every headache, smashed thumb, stomach upset, however fine the rest of us may be. And beyond that, how rare the person who can bear habitual pain or weakness with not just patience but also a semblance of good humor, as in this storied interchange: One Irishman asks, "How are you feeling?" The other answers, "Terrible, thanks be to God." ("Tolerable," they would say instead in the U.S. countryside.)

I recall a scene from an emergency room in Louvain, Belgium, several decades ago. A sturdy Flemish woman was carrying on uncontrollably. I thought some crisis was under way, but a woman beside me, gaunt from her own bouts of illness, explained to me amiably in French that the woman had never been sick before. "Poor baby," one is tempted to comment. But why wish ill health on anyone?

The body certainly merits appreciation. Father Walter Ciszek, S.J., put this unforgettably in a chapter of his memoirs and reflections, *He Leadeth Me*

It seems to take aging or illness, doesn't it, to make us grateful for the gift of the body, the one we so rough up and wear down. When the body starts fraying, then we notice it more—or when it gives us a scare. Of course, we do appreciate wellness at its

(Ignatius Press, 1973; reprinted 1995), written after twenty-three years of captivity and forced labor in Russia. The chapter is entitled simply "The Body."

No machine ever devised by man could have withstood, day in and day out, the constant, punishing grind of work in the severest kind of weather that the human body proved itself able to withstand in the Siberian labor camps. It is customary to speak of the "indomitable human spirit" as that which carries man through crises like this, but the body surely merits more attention than it usually gets. Not the trained, beautifully conditioned body of the athlete, but the weak, underfed and ordinary body with which we are all endowed. It was under the daily regimen of work to exhaustion in the camps, under the constant torture of hunger and cold, through hurt and pain, distress and disease, weariness beyond comprehension and endurance beyond belief, that I came truly to understand and appreciate the catechism truth that man is a creature composed of body and soul.

Ciszek adds, a little further on, that "the strain in Christian asceticism that tends to despise the body or emphasize its constant need to be checked and controlled by the nobler part of man" is quite mistaken.

Evolutionary thought has made us very aware of something that keepers of pets have known about all along: our strong animal connection. The connection goes two ways. *Time* magazine devoted a cover story recently to the question of animal emotions. Various animals, the report maintained with a stream of detail, show impressive traces, or simulacra, of human emotion—loyalty and fondness, grief over loss of a mate, playfulness. And we humans do not need reminding of our own animal reactions, such as the appetites and hungers that often render us like the family pet lapping up Purina chow or the male pigeon puffing up and strutting to attract the female. Our animal side is subject to all the familiar rhythms of tiredness and sleep, digestion and elimination—plus, for women, the monthly "curse." Biology, genetics, pharmacology, and medical science take us a long way further into knowing our physical determinants.

What should fascinate us, however, is the specifically human dimension of body—that is, how much about it we are at liberty to indulge, modify, restrict, heighten, regulate. The gamut runs from promiscuity to celibacy, from gentleness to coarseness, from neglect of one's person to absorption with makeup and grooming. The distinctive thing about us, I think, is not so much the complexes and compulsions uncovered by Freud and embroidered by everyone else, but our continuing to be, in spite of all, "at liberty."

We come into the world through the birth canal (normally), with a horizon traced out for us, limita-

tions imposed on us, a palpable shape and disposition. We arrive, in other words, with a given body. Sex and gender, to take the most obvious component, will affect us in every fiber—will dictate, though with highly individual traits, how we react to stimuli from others, how our imagination works, how we feel at a given moment. Yet what a field of choice our body—our hormones, our nervous system, our five senses—provides us with. And what a field day, one has to add, it provides to novelists and other storytellers.

There is no denying the power of ingrained habits and the unremitting therapy needed to emerge from them, but a stubborn hope too can infuse the battle to humanize oneself. There is no denying the multiple atrocities, the cruelty and even sadism, of which the human creature is capable. Our tabloids and our history books feed on them. We apply the word *bestly* to our mass executioners and punishers, but that is a slight to animals, who are incapable of such evil. Our species, however, is also at liberty for self-sacrifice. Many animals, for the good of their progeny and species, are programmed to self-sacrifice; we are enabled and encouraged to choose it.

Jesus Christ, we need to remind ourselves, became one of us in all the dimensions of our flesh, as well as with exemplary freedom. Saint John the Evangelist left us no details of the infancy of Jesus, but he summed it up in that most telling of short sentences: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Whoever devised the word *incarnation* deserves undying gratitude. It tells us not just that the Son of God became man—or human—but also that he took on the energetic and feeling substance, along with the weight and woe, of flesh.

The most unpleasant corollary of being in the flesh is our subjection to death. The Letter to the Hebrews helps us to face this shadow:

Since the children are men of blood and flesh, Jesus likewise had a full share in ours, that by his death he might rob the devil, the prince of death, of his powers, and free those who through fear of death had been slaves their whole life long. Surely he did not come to help angels, but rather the children of Abraham; therefore he had to become like his brothers in every way. (2: 14–17)

Jesus went before us in every respect, says the author of Hebrews, and that includes his experiencing our terrible aversion to death. "In the days when he was in the flesh," Jesus let out desperate prayers and outcries to be spared the horrors ahead of him, the full exposure to human malice—"and he was heard." Not that he was spared; but by his obedience, his readiness to abide by God's plan, he achieved the purpose of his incarnation: to lead us into his own grace and total freedom, to help

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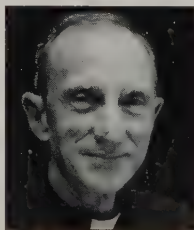
us live these bodily lives with gratefulness and self-respect.

We come back, then, with invaluable perspective, to the topic that can prove so bedeviling to us—that of body image. My own body image could have been much more positive; many others, in early or later life, can say the same. My mother helped me in at least one way by continually insisting, “*Sta dritto*” (“Stand up straight”). This was a good behavioral move. When I see someone walking at full height, “chest out” (as for the exercises in physical education class), I recognize a healthy attitude, good self-

appreciation. If only we can preserve that posture from the tinctures of arrogance and self-satisfaction.

Some years ago I found just the right book of prints, *The Nude Man*, by a San Francisco artist, Beth Van Hoesen (privately printed, Crown Point Press). They were all nude poses of men, many of them her acquaintances, with nothing about them of the slick or suggestive. I sent her an early version of the poem printed here, and she wrote back some kind words. She had taken a lot of criticism, she said, because her engravings were so different from the current photographic chic, to say nothing of the whole voyeuristic tradition of female nudes.

The art historian John Berger, in *Ways of Seeing* (1972), claims that of the hundreds of thousands of European nudes, only perhaps a hundred convey the painter's personal vision of a particular woman; the rest afford merely a supine object. The nudes in Van Hoesen's book, as I remember them, are ordinary, even at times dumpy. Berger would have had Van Hoesen change her title, no doubt, given his distaste for the word *nude*. “To be naked is to be oneself,” he claims; “to be nude is to be seen naked by others and yet not recognized for oneself.” Still, Van Hoesen does clearly recognize what Berger tells us in his pages: that nakedness, in which we're more like the others of our sex than different, has a warm and friendly anonymity, even a banality. It's how Adam and Eve were, how God made us—and good for God.



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A Parish for Tomorrow

Thomas P. Sweetser, S.J., Ph.D.

Two thousand years before Christ, Abram and Sarah were asked to leave the security of their homeland and venture into the unknown. Jesus asked the same of a small group of followers two thousand years ago. The significance of these two great transitions should not be lost as we ponder this unique moment in history. We are on the edge of a new era. As we try to peer into the future, what do we see?

Let us extend our gaze just ten years into the future. What will be happening at that time? Undoubtedly, instant communication will be the hallmark of the age. Telephones, computers, networks, and high-definition television will continue to shape our lives. We will be in global contact with everyone, and information will come tumbling into our lives from all directions. Whether we will be relating with one another in meaningful ways is quite another matter.

Consumerism and a market-driven society will keep pushing products and services upon us, making us feel deficient, unworthy, and "behind the times" if we don't have the latest, fanciest, most efficient, or most satisfying gadget or service available. Whether all this stuff will bring us happiness is questionable, but the onslaught will continue.

With the escalating pressure to buy comes a deepening divide between those who are able to buy and those who are not, between those who have and those

who have not, between those who experience success and those who don't. In the midst of this milieu sits the parish of the new generation. What should it look like ten years from now? How should it be reacting to the surrounding culture? What changes will be needed or desirable? What issues will face the parish of the future?

PRIESTHOOD AND EUCHARIST

The first issue facing the parish in the near future is whether there will even be a local parish at all. The danger is that the shortage of ordained priests and the corresponding scarcity of Eucharist and the sacraments will lead to a collapse of the small parish. The pressure to make the Eucharist available to all will create a new configuration of mega-churches that offer only a few masses attended by large congregations. Priesthood, in other words, is the first issue that will have to be addressed within the next ten years.

The shortage of clergy is approaching critical proportions. Priests are getting burned out, retiring early, and dying at a younger age because of the strain. Only a limited number of recruits are joining the ranks of the priesthood. Bishops, priests, and others continue to adapt to this growing shortage, taking

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stopgap measures to stem the tide—but the problem will not go away. New vocations are in no way filling up the vacuum created by those who have left, died, or retired.

Can a substantial change in the requirements for priesthood take place within the next ten years? From our limited perspective, it must take place if the Catholic church is to remain a people of God gathered around the table of the Lord. The tragedy is that in the effort to provide Eucharist to the widest population possible, the system of local worshiping faith communities will be destroyed. The combining and closing of parishes in some situations does make sense, especially if their churches were built in close proximity because of previous ethnic migrations. On the other hand, if a parish of 200, 500, or 1,000 families is asked to combine with another of even greater size, then the possibility of feeling “at home” and in close personal contact with one another will be lost forever, along with the rich traditions associated with each parish. This is a great tragedy.

Why have the requirements for priesthood taken so long to change? The church has had a married clergy

for over half its history, and there exist married priests in the Roman Rite at this time through Episcopalian attrition. Is the delay attributable to a fear of change, a question of control over placements, a concern about the extra costs involved, an uneasiness with marriage itself? Or could it be instead that what has been developing over the last number of years is an act of God? Is this the Spirit's way of purifying the concept of priesthood? Could the Holy Spirit be offering us a chance to see that a simple change in the requirements of ordination is not enough? What is needed instead is a new system of priesthood that is more mutual, inclusive, and collaborative. Some local parishes are learning a new way of operating. These are ones in which pastoral administrators, those who are not priests, are pastoring congregations. Parishioners do not place these women and men on pedestals, call them by titles, or expect them to provide priestly services. Instead, the people pitch in—and, together with the pastoral administrator, they are creating a new way of being a church that is a partnership between administrator and people. When Eucharist is celebrated, the sacramental minister (priest) and the administrator preside side by side, and the people join them in a mutual celebration of the liturgy.

Is ten years too soon to see this change in the priestly system become a reality? We certainly hope not. Time is running out. If the change does not happen soon, many parish communities will be destroyed, priests will get worn out and leave, potential candidates for priesthood who are not celibate men will be left unutilized, and Catholics will have their needs unaddressed.

A change in who can be ordained will not solve all the problems of the future parish, but it will have many positive effects and implications. We can only begin to imagine what new avenues and insights this new system could bring to the exploration of married love and family issues. It would help all priests find a balance between being available to the people and having time for one's personal interests and pursuits. Raising a family brings into focus the essential values in life and helps one to maintain a balance. Topics for preaching and insights for counseling are enhanced if priests can draw upon personal experiences that are similar to those of the people they serve.

What will bring about this change to a new, inclusive priesthood? New models are being tried that indicate how much can be gained by a pastoring style that comes from a variety of lifestyles and personal experiences. Will the change come from above or below, from the bishops or the people, from outside the structures or from within? We do not know, but come it must. The risk of not changing is losing what

is an essential aspect of the church: people gathering around the table of the Lord to celebrate Eucharist as a community of believers.

I have a vision that somewhere in the world, some unknown person is being called into a “burning bush” experience—just as Moses was asked to “come closer,” to take off his shoes because he was standing on Holy Ground, and given the mandate to free his people from oppression. Moses, of course, resisted the call, but then he obeyed. He and his brother Aaron went to the seat of power in Egypt and demanded freedom from bondage. Could not a recurrence of that event be in its infancy now? The question, of course, is whether we will be willing to say yes to the invitation to be part of the journey to a new land, to change this system and way of operating. The security and comfort of Egypt makes it difficult to let go and move into the desert. We may lose our treasures and cherished way of being a church—our first-born—in the process. The next ten years may be a time for wandering in search of the new land of a renewed priesthood.

THE NEW FOCUS FOR PARISH

Opening up the requirements for priesthood is not the only change that will be necessary for parishes over the next ten years. Young adults are not coming to church as they once did. The percentage of those attending weekly masses has continued to fall in recent years. It could happen that we solve the priesthood shortage in another way: people will no longer come, and as a result the churches will be empty. How can the image of the local church become more inviting and attractive to people, especially to the young, the inactive, the alienated, and those on the fringe?

My suggestion is that over the next ten years the focus of the parish be shifted from “in here” to “out there.” Instead of concentrating on inviting people back to church, reach out to those on the fringe and address their issues and concerns. Put yourself in their shoes; live in their world; understand their needs, frustrations, and fears.

START FROM THE MARGIN

The implication of this shift is a change in emphasis and expectation. No longer does regular attendance at mass or participation in parish functions become as important as offering events that are meaningful and relate to people’s everyday experiences. This appears to be the Jesus model of pastoral ministry revealed in the gospels. He was with the outcasts and marginal people and was criticized

because of it. His followers were not of the mainstream. What would a Catholic parish look like if it tried to follow Jesus’ approach?

The first step would be to seek out those fringe people. That is not a difficult task. Begin with the registration lists. Many of those whose names are on the census files are inactive or nominal members of the parish. Connect with these people by phone, e-mail, personal visits, websites. Have no agenda other than to listen to their stories. These people will lead you to others even farther out on the periphery. Resist the temptation to invite them back to church. Just listen. Help them live lives that have meaning and purpose. In the listening you may discover a deep spiritual longing despite a lack of religious affiliation and identity. Help them reflect on their life experiences; call them to refocus and go deeper. Help them celebrate the high and low moments of their lives. The setting for this sharing may be one-on-one interaction over the phone, through a personal visit, in small groups, or by a computer connection. It may be far from the parish buildings.

One way of relating to those on the fringe is to stress events rather than regular attendance. Midnight mass, Easter Sunday, Ash Wednesday, and Mother’s Day are the only times many people see the inside of a church. Build on these events and offer more like them, both within and outside the parish buildings. Sponsor special happenings, such as prayer services, outings, social justice efforts, work projects, socials, and sports activities; appeal to youths and young adults, as well as to those of all ages. These events should include preparation and cooperative planning for the participants beforehand and group reflection afterward. These are the moments people remember for years as positive experiences of church. They test people’s endurance, stretch their imaginations, demand involvement, and challenge narrow and provincial outlooks. They also provide occasions to celebrate successes, experience solidarity with others, and acknowledge a mystery at work in their lives.

I recently visited a parish that had a monthly Taizé prayer service. Everyone was invited, regardless of religious affiliation or spiritual inclination. The church was packed with people. They sat in the sanctuary, filled the choir loft, crowded into the aisles. The service was simple, consisting mostly of songs with few words and uncomplicated melodies. There was no sermon or collection, only singing and silence. Toward the end, people brought up lighted candles and placed them in containers filled with sand around the altar. By the end of the service, which lasted just an hour, the candles were burning down and spilling onto the sand. After it was over, people stood around

the dying candles in quiet, prayerful conversation with one another. It was a profound experience of church—an event to remember.

NEW MODEL POSSIBLE

The shift in focus to “out there” may take ten years to accomplish, but now it is time to plan how to get to this new place and to take the first steps in this direction. It will mean changing the roles and positions of staff members so these professional ministers are freed to connect and attend to the marginal members. Staff members will need time to think up events that will appeal to a wide spectrum of interests and desires and then get the word out to the marginal and hesitant people. It will also be necessary to challenge and redirect the focus of the parishioners who do come regularly to church so that they themselves become the connectors and listeners to the alienated, the shy, and the “too-busy-to-attend” people.

In keeping with this “out there” focus, the staff and parish leaders need to be challenged to bring the parish to the people, not the people to the parish. How can the parish help the marginals achieve their spiritual goals, discover God’s operation in their personal lives, affirm their many acts of everyday ministry? What if a staff were structured not around areas of ministry like education, youth, outreach, liturgy, and administration, but around groups of people in the parish, such as working mothers, students, professionals, retired people, marginal and inactive Catholics? The parish, in this model, would provide the framework, resources, and encouragement for spiritual development, family growth, ministry in the workplace, integrity in moral decision making. Staff members might visit the work sites of parishioners and experience firsthand what issues and circumstances people face in trying to be ministers on the job. Such connections would be an endorsement by the parish of the value of people’s work.

Taking the parish to the people will mean a change in how parish finances are spent, allowing for more open-ended, nondiscretionary budgeting so that money is available for new and unknown initiatives. Creative allocations will need to be made in order to connect with the voiceless and hidden members of the parish and with other people who surface as the parish reaches out beyond its normal boundaries. No longer will the emphasis be on regular attendance, rules and regulations, set and defined programs, a quantified series of classes or presentations. The new emphasis will be on meaningful events and open learning that is connected to people’s own stories and relationships, on dialogue that adapts to changing situations and is open to a wide variety of options.

It is a “parish without walls” I am advocating—one that has a fluid membership and an adaptable structure. This model is being experienced in the business world, with home-based workstations, flexible hours, and interaction at a distance. This same fluid structure is possible for parishes over the next ten years. All that is needed is to “think outside the box” of the current parish structure and organization. The problem is not how to do this. People will supply the ideas once they are encouraged to explore options and given seed money to put their ideas into operation. The parish could offer not only funding but also meeting space and staff resources for creative initiatives.

The current experience of small communities of faith could lead the way toward this future of a new locus for the parish. Unfortunately, many small communities quickly become closed groups that delight in their own interaction but are resistant to new members, new ministries, and activities beyond their circle. These small communities need to be challenged with a new focus and purpose for their existence. The parish leadership needs to call these groups to be gospel-oriented communities, encouraging them to reach out beyond their circle and risk the unfamiliar.

Establish traditions of tenure for small communities. After three years suggest that they divide in half and form two new groups. Open the groups up to a diverse membership of different ages, ethnic identities, and backgrounds. The parish will need to provide direction and support during the transition of these small communities into new groupings.

The continuous rise of a multicultural Catholic membership increases the urgency of taking the parish to those on the fringe. The advantaged parishioners—those with education and financial resources—will always find a place to worship and a church community that fits their needs. They are used to picking and choosing what fits their desires and having their expectations met. Recent immigrants, the poor and disenfranchised, the uneducated and unskilled, the elderly and disadvantaged don’t have the ability to reach out for what fits their needs, either in the culture or in the church. They have to be sought out and given a sense of self-worth. They need to be listened to, need to gain confidence that they are being heard. They must be included as part of God’s people and affirmed in their own spiritual journey and insights.

How all this will happen we cannot say. That it must happen we have no doubt. The alternative is to become a religion for the “saved” that is closed to the very people who can provide new life and direction to the church. It is the people on the fringe who will tell

us how to become a new church in the twenty-first century.

RECONCILING LEADERSHIP

In ten years, with a new, inclusive priesthood and an emphasis on going out to the people on the fringe, the parish will have a good chance of becoming a church modeled on the gospels—one that reflects the mission and ministry of Jesus. One additional ingredient, however, is needed. The country and the world at large have experienced many divisions and altercations. Some individuals and groups try to do each other harm. The same sort of feuding and narrowness is found in the church as well. What is needed in the coming years is a new type of leadership, both on the local level and in the universal church—a leadership that is inclusive, reconciling, and accepting of various factions and worldviews. Pope John XXIII had that charisma, and humanity was better for it. The world is in dire need of just such a charisma in these early years of the new century.

The emphasis of the new approach is on dialogue, interaction, and sharing of differences. There can no longer be “us” and “them” in the parish of the future, whether among the parish membership or in relation to other denominations and religions. We all serve the same God. Divisions only weaken the reign of God and make a lie of our profession of faith and values.

Our dream is that the parish of ten years hence will be known for bridging the gaps and breaking down the walls that separate one group from another. The neighborhood community is full of people praying to the same God in different languages, gestures, methods, and images. If local clusters of churches and places of worship can come together to confront common issues and problems, then “Catholic” will take on a new meaning. The church will begin to signify in its actions what the word *catholic* means: universal. Each local parish will learn to accept a wide range of groups and interests, both within its own structure and in the surrounding area.

This might start slowly and in small pockets across the country. The staff and leaders in one parish might begin by concentrating on healing divisions among their own members and reaching out with reconciling gestures to churches and religious groups in the vicinity. They might acknowledge areas in which the parish and the larger church have made mistakes or

acted in a derogatory fashion. This admission of guilt could open the door to new dialogue and understanding, paving the way for common prayer and worship, as well as joint activities and common service projects.

Such actions would give other parishes the courage to follow suit. Soon there could be large gatherings of “reconciling leaders” who speak of their own failures and limitations, as well as those of their churches. This would give rise to a new spirituality of admitting failures and taking responsibility for one’s own faults and limitations. Soon Catholic parishes would be in the forefront of a new movement toward greater unity and mutual sharing, ranging from sharing resources to common work projects. This in turn could begin to change the world’s image of Americans from harsh and self-righteous to gentle and caring. Impossible? Perhaps—but never underestimate the power of an idea and of a few people who are willing to see that idea come to life and bear fruit. That is what happened in the early church two thousand years ago. There is no reason it could not happen again as we move into a new age.

The Spirit of Jesus is still alive in the church and in the world. His Spirit will find a way to preach the Good News to those hungry for spiritual nourishment. His Spirit will continue to gather people together and teach them the essentials of real gospel living. His Spirit will set people free, healing the hurts that hold them captive. His Spirit will continue to call people to prayer and worship, to deep loving and gentle kindness, to witnessing to the truth that sets people free, to standing up for the rights and needs of others. This will continue to happen in the years to come. The question is, will the church and the local parish face the challenge, or will it be taken over by others? The choice is in our hands: be a church and bring about the reign of God, or get out of the way and let others answer the call to mission and ministry.



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Where Are You?

Marie Beha, O.S.C., Ph.D.

It is one of the oldest questions—one that we have all asked and been asked. You might say it is the original question, coming as it does at the beginnings of all askings, both personal and communal.

This query can be as basic as a two-year-old being asked by some stranger, “Where do you live?” or crying in panic, “Mommy, where are you?” or as perfunctory as an adult inquiring of the total stranger sitting next to her in the plane, “Are you going to Atlanta or just making connections?” It can also be one of the most profound questions we ask ourselves at times of deepest soul searching: “Where am I? Where am I going? Where do I want to go?”

This was also God’s original question to us humans in the garden, asking, “Where are you?” (Gen. 3:9), searching out Adam and Eve hiding there after their sin. And it is still God’s question, asked of each of us as we move on in life. Place, like time, makes a difference in our own life journey, just as it did in the saving mission of Jesus.

BECOMING ONE OF US

After Adam and Eve had tried to lose themselves in the garden, covering their shame with the flimsy excuse of a fig leaf, God came looking for them. God knew quite well where they were, and so did they:

they had lost their place in paradise. What they did not know was the direction they should go now, or how to get back home.

Human history begins with this original loss of place. As scripture phrases it, God “sent him [Adam] forth from the garden of Eden” (Gen. 3:23), but we all know that it was our ancestors, not God, who were responsible for this exile, this loss of the homeland entrusted to them. Yet God’s gracious creativity would not allow final displacement. Human disobedience would be redeemed by the Son of God, who said, “Here I am; . . . I delight to do your will” (Ps. 40). Jesus had a position of “equality with God,” but he would “humble himself” (Phil. 2:6–8), taking his place as one of us, accepting all the limitations that go with being human, including those of space.

In Jesus the all-present God would experience what it means to be circumscribed by geography: to claim Bethlehem as his birthplace, to call Nazareth home, to accompany his parents on the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem for temple worship. Later on he would leave home and begin to move from village to village, proclaiming the Good News, all the while setting his face toward Jerusalem and Calvary’s hill, “outside the city.” Like us, Jesus would experience places of welcome and friendship, as well as deserts of prayer. He would be received into some places as an honored

guest but also be given a lukewarm reception in others, even being asked to leave. Though Nazareth was his hometown, it would reject him, threatening his very life. As an itinerant preacher, Jesus would spend his last years moving from place to place, “having nowhere to lay his head” (Matt. 8:20). At the end he would know a supper room of sharing and a garden of grief, and in death a place of burial in another’s tomb.

From that last place of apparent defeat, Jesus would rise, never again to be confined by our categories of time and place. The risen Jesus would appear in a garden and in an upper room, on the way to Emmaus as well as by the shore. Suddenly, he would be here, or there—and just as abruptly be gone, leaving his astonished disciples behind. From Tabor he would take final leave of his followers: “I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (John 20:17). But he would not leave them orphans; rather, his going was necessary if the Spirit were to come and dwell in the church forever: “I am with you always” (Matt. 28:20).

THE “WHERE” OF OUR BEGINNINGS

Scripture’s story is also ours. God asks us, too, “Where are you?” and waits for our answer. The same loss of place experienced by Adam and Eve precedes our baptism. The same redemptive coming from the Father and returning to the Father that was the story of Jesus is incarnate in our life journey. The place where we live makes a difference in our response, just as our response effects a real change in that landscape. Geography is not something purely external; it becomes part of us, giving shape and form to who we are and who we become.

Like that of Jesus, our identity is shaped by our birthplace, our hometown, the environment in which we grow up, the geography and values and customs of our country. The earliest places in our lives are not of our own choosing. Just as we do not determine our coming into existence, neither do we choose our place of birth or the situation of our earliest years. In the beginning of our life, we do not have a say as to where we will live—what house or neighborhood, what town or country. All are chosen for us. Only as the years go on will we have the opportunity to affirm or reject what was originally given.

Our place of birth, though not of our choosing, still provides our initial point of reference: “I come from. . . .” The statement is more inclusive and more significant than just naming a certain spot. Our birthplace serves to locate us in the world, giving us a sense of belonging somewhere. Not knowing where we were born leaves us rootless; trying to hide the

place and circumstances of our beginnings is far worse, miring us in denial. In contrast, returning to the place of our birth, at least in memory, can give us some experience of how much we have been gifted. Our parents, in all probability, chose that place; even if they did not select it with us in mind, they did choose to give us a place “among the living.” They could have done otherwise.

Going back to the place of our birth, either in fact or in image, can also bring us into contact with the circumstances of our first and most formative years. That place of our beginning will undoubtedly recall pain that still needs healing, as well as ever-new understanding of how we have gotten to where we are now. It will also point us in the direction of where we may go from here. The “what ifs” of our imagination also allow us to speculate where we would be now if things had been different at the beginning. Perhaps there are days when we would gladly trade places with someone else. Perhaps there are other times when we feel blessed beyond all calculation because of the givens of our origins. In either case, our beginnings are more initial direction than absolute determination. We still have choices, lots of them.

Very early in life we began to move beyond the narrow confines of birthplace and babyhood’s confinement. As we did so, our world expanded. It grew greater still when we started school. Now part of every day was spent in another world away from home and its protective walls. We began to give our personal answer to “Where are you?”

We started to locate ourselves in a world of competition and comparison. Losing the unselfconsciousness of early childhood, we came to identify ourselves in relation to others. “Taller,” “smarter,” “bigger” banished us from the paradise of just “being,” leaving us open to the toil and labor of achieving a place for ourselves over and usually against others. Often enough we found ourselves trying to displace others or distance ourselves from them; at least that is one possible script.

If we had a secure enough place inside, we could simply be ourselves and know that it was good. Coming from a circle of certain love puts one in a position to remain centered, not taking as facts what are only present circumstances. Then who I am becomes less a matter of comparisons and more an ongoing creative response rising from within. I am less inclined to locate myself by what I do and then rate myself and my performance in contrast to yours. Rather, I let the truth of who I am give rise to how I act and how I respond to you. We are not rivals competing against one another but partners in a shared endeavor. Such a place of secure centering is the paradise we all have lost to some extent. How far away we have wandered

is a variable, but we are all struggling to find our way home.

From childhood on we have had to learn to make peace with spatial limits, learning to leave one place and move on to another. We have experienced places where we were at home and others where we found ourselves aliens in a strange land. It is a rhythm that continues to repeat itself. Over and over again we leave home, find a place where we can be at home, make a home. Then once again we must endure separation. Some of the places we have come to know will always be associated with peace and joy, and to these we will return gladly. Others will recall situations of sadness, possibly of shame, which we hope never to revisit. In any case we must move on. Like Jesus, we continue to search for our place in the world.

Where will I live my life? Where can I give myself, and with whom? These are the adult questions by which we locate ourselves in the larger world. The search begins with leaving home, often literally, but certainly in some ritualistic yet real way. This is an essential part of moving into our public life of chosen relationships and service to others. Name and address are now followed by occupation. I am a teacher, construction worker, electrician—our work begins to spell out something of our identity. Ability to function locates one in a specialized contribution to society and is a justifiable source of pride. It imposes limits but also frees us to go deeper, to become proficient; at least this is the ideal.

In reality, occupation may only confine, constrict, even enslave, as it does if where we are is not where we choose to be but only the place where we earn our living. From it we escape to someplace where we'd rather be, where our activity is received gift rather than earned wage. This can be a part-time job, personal relationships, or a hobby; it can be music or gardening or anything else that spells out our unique contribution to our world. This then becomes the place where we really are, no matter where our bodies may have to be during the working day.

Of course, it is also possible that our attempts to escape from job limits are basically unfocused. We may search, but finding nowhere to go or no way to get there, we simply settle for whatever gives us some immediate satisfaction. We live to eat, to drink, to play, avoiding adult responsibilities. We are going nowhere; hopefully, we know it.

More subtle and so more dangerous is the temptation to locate ourselves exclusively or at least primarily by what we do. When we do, work defines us, setting limits to our growth in other areas. Relationships suffer; our focus narrows and we begin to shrink inside, even while celebrating the reach of our

power. One day we wake up to discover that we have lost our way.

Where is your treasure? That is the question that ultimately reveals where we really are, where our life finds its meaning. In one sense the answer changes as circumstances and situations change. The response of an uncommitted younger person is different from that of the same individual married or parenting a child, and different yet from that of an older person living out a few remaining years. Over time, priorities shift, placing an individual in a new circle of relationships. In other words, where we are is not fixed on some map of personal space. At the same time, life orientation remains a constant. We know the basic direction in which we are moving, despite shifts in the background of our lives. In this sense place becomes one of the constants of our lives, giving us the stability that enables us to respond to change.

And the scenery of our lives does change us. Open spaces free us; natural beauty calms and enlarges our spirits. Noise seeds conflict; ugliness dwarfs us; darkness shrouds mystery. But the kind of person we are also effects changes in the "geography" of our lives. A depressed individual can darken a whole landscape, just as someone who is very angry can shatter the calmest of scenes. Pollution comes in many guises.

This interaction of person and place is subtle but significant. Where we stand in relation to others can be revealed in the way we locate ourselves in their regard. From some persons we seek distance, moving away from them physically or at least looking in another direction. Others we invite into our space, moving toward them, touching them, taking their hand. Our language suggests something of this mutuality of space and relation: we speak of distant cousins, near neighbors, close friends. It is also revealed in those places we call sacred.

SACRED PLACES

This dynamic of mutuality between space and person enters into our relationship with God. We hold some places sacred. Why? Because they open us to the holy and so help to make us holy. Perhaps we associate them with moments of revelation, when we knew either for the first time or in some new and deeper way who we were and where we were going. Other places locate events that have been particularly significant, initiating changes or celebrating new directions in our lives. We remember these and return to them, at least in memory. Still others invite us here and now into contemplative presence, stilling our spirits while opening us out to something more than the immediacy of our surroundings. Blazing

beauty under a summer sun, the power of a storm, the stillness of an empty house—all call us to be present where we are and, at the same time, move us beyond the boundaries of time and space. Such experiences cannot be contrived; they are gifts and can only be received. Still we can seek out places of potential encounter: a quiet spot at home, a secluded nook in the backyard, a special chair in a busy kitchen. We can even take advantage of moments alone in a car or walking through a parking lot to let ourselves move more deeply into the center of our being.

LIFE IS A COMING HOME

Here in the place where we are ourselves, we know and accept the truth of our uniqueness; here we stand in the freedom that answers to self and for self; here we both find and make our home. But the finding is not so much a deliberate searching as it is a discovery of what has always been present, if only obscurely. And the making is not a construct of our imagination but a moving deeper into what has always been a given. It is a place we recognize when we are there and seek to return to when somehow we have moved away. In this sense all of life is a coming home to ourselves and to the God who dwells within.

This most sacred of all places is where we belong. It is our primary locus, not because it is where we start but because it is where all our searching comes to an end. Every time we open ourselves to the here as well as the now of our lives, we move closer to this core of our being, where everything is holy.

Discovering God at this center of ourselves makes it more possible for us to find God everywhere and anywhere. For any place and every place promises encounter, if we are able to bring ourselves there and wait in quiet expectancy. At the same time, no place captures God, ensuring us of a meeting. God is too big to be confined, too free to be captured by any technique of pious control. So we may find ourselves more present to God in kitchen or bathtub than in church or shrine.

We don't command revelation; we only await it. And we do this best when we simply believe in its possibility enough to remove potential blocks. Though we can't summon God's breaking into our lives, we can resist or refuse it. Freedom gives us humans the power of veto. We can avoid the holy even in places that are officially titled sacred. The list of evasions is long and tailor-made to our personality. For the most part they are the same techniques that limit our interpersonal relationships: "I am too busy," "This is not a good day (or time)." But we can also be more subtle. We know how to make any exchange remain

If we are inclined to overlook the revelatory quality of the holy in the ordinary, we are even more likely to miss God's presence in situations of suffering

on the surface, polite but distant. We chatter on, using all the right words to cover over a closed heart. If we talk enough, there will be no need to listen. We rattle off our prayers and don't give God a chance. Or we simply move away from a place of worship as quickly as we can. And when this is not physically possible, we may still find ways not to really be there in spirit. It is an art that most of us have learned and use at least occasionally, especially when we are bored yet have to remain physically where we find ourselves. By opening the door of our imagination we escape into more pleasant surroundings.

At other times we don't even expect to encounter the holy and so miss the revelatory gift that is being offered to us. Accustomed to identifying "sacred" with "set apart," we are oblivious to the holiness of the ordinary. The gospel counsel of becoming like little children can help us to discover the surprises so often hidden from our more pragmatic point of view. We calculate usefulness, missing beauty; we disdain the strange rather than welcome the new. We wear the dark glasses of overfamiliarity and so miss the real color of our surroundings. Dividing the world into secular and sacred impoverishes both.

If we are inclined to overlook the revelatory quality of the holy in the ordinary, we are even more likely to miss God's presence in situations of suffering. Pain, grief, loneliness, emptiness, darkness seem to be almost the opposite of revelation. All too often they turn us in on ourselves, blocking out the world

around us. Yet they hold more promise of opening us to God than do many formal places of worship. Why? Because they bring us closer to that dependence which is the truth about ourselves. We need others, need God, desperately. We can't make it on our own, can't find our way by ourselves—but how we would like to. So we posture independence, resist offers of help, avoid occasions of obvious neediness. We would rather do without than admit our poverty.

But suffering and pain have a way of bringing us to a place of greater truth. What we have no longer promises security; what we have accomplished seems irrelevant. Going beyond this place of pain is all that matters at the moment. What we need to discover is that the only way beyond is through. When denial is no longer possible and we have no immediate hope of escape, acceptance becomes our only hope. We must endure with what patience we can summon.

In that very enduring we discover a center of peace even deeper than the pain. We would rather not be where we are, but if we have to live here, at least for now, then we can make peace with the suffering rather than rail against it. In accepting, we relax, and when we do so we discover that we have found a place where nothing can really trouble us. We are at home in our Father's house.

Such rootedness in the will of God is our ultimate resting place. Most of us reach it rarely, if at all, in the here and now of our busy lives. But it is where Jesus lived, and where we can too, if we make Kingdom concerns the environment of our lives. Then "your Kingdom come, your will be done" is the theme of our daily doing, not just of our occasional praying. What we say we desire, we try to bring to fulfillment as we find God where God has told us to search: in feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, and so on, down all the works of mercy. Then every place in our lives becomes sacred; every situation offers an opportunity for transcendence that catches up the here into the hereafter.

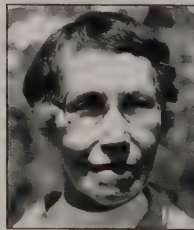
In this way all the circumstances of our lives are turned into redemptive opportunities. Our place of birth, establishing the basics of our identity as belonging to this people, this neighborhood, this nation, locates us in the world of creation. For the rest of our

lives we will live out of these initial realities. But we can also change their meaning as we move on into a wider world of chosen relationships and life occupations. Now not only do the places we live shape us; we also shape them. They become the situations in which we work out our redemption—and as we do, this world of ours is also redeemed.

In this interaction we also discover places we call sacred because they bring us into deeper contact with the divine. Some of these provide surprise encounters; others are places set apart for worship. In either case what happens is that we gradually come to find the holy everywhere, even in places of pain and suffering. Most of all, we discover that center where we can respond to God's question "Where are you?" with the amen of "Here I am; you called me" (I Sam. 3:5).

For this is the most sacred of all places, the one where we really belong. It is our primary locus, first not in the sense that it is where we start but because it is where our searching ends. Yet every time we open ourselves to the here as well as the now of our lives, we move closer to this core of our being, where everything is holy.

In all these varied situations of our lives, we too find ourselves, like Jesus, "making our way to Jerusalem," where all the roads we have traveled in life merge into the place of our dying. There will be an end to all our pilgrimaging, a final place of reckoning. There God will ask not so much "Where have you been?" as "Where are you?" here and now. In that time and place we will find ourselves either at home in heaven or left in a hell of our own making, the choice of our final location having been accomplished in the present's now and here.



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The Mind of a Paranoid

Richard P. Vaughan, S.J., Ph.D.

Among the many forms of mental illness, paranoia is one of the most difficult to deal with, both for the professional and for the nonprofessional. Most paranoids have their own rigid, slanted way of looking at the world, cling to that view with ferocious tenacity, and expect everyone else to look at the world as they do. Any suggestion that their view of the world may not be accurate or valid usually meets with an angry rebuttal, and occasionally with an outburst of temper, much to the dismay of the person who challenged the paranoid's point of view.

Paranoid individuals have an unfounded or ill-founded belief that people or the members of an organization are harassing and persecuting them, and feelings of animosity or even hatred toward their imagined persecutors. They fail to trust others, question the intentions and motives of others, and blame others for their own and the world's troubles. Some of these characteristics are present in normal people, but to a much lesser degree, and do not dominate the individual's thoughts and emotions or disrupt his or her outlook on reality.

In the United States there are three men with paranoia for every woman affected. The disorder is found among people from all walks of life, including priests and male and female members of religious communities. Paranoia usually begins during the late teens

or early adulthood, is most commonly found in people over the age of 40, and can take any of the following three forms: everyday paranoia, paranoid personality disorder (PPD), or paranoid schizophrenia.

EVERYDAY PARANOIA

At one time or another, many people experience a symptom of paranoia but do not act on it. This is called everyday paranoia. People with everyday paranoia are not mentally ill but have one trait or another of the seriously paranoid. A typical example is the person who has misplaced his watch and thinks that the housekeeper stole it, or the woman who makes sure that the windows in her bedroom are locked and the shades are drawn once it gets dark because she is afraid that a man is looking into one of the windows, ready to climb in and assault her.

Paranoia can be a defense that allows a person to cope with misfortune or a personal problem rather than view the situation as a personal failure or the result of incompetence on his or her part. In this case, it allows the person to place responsibility on another and thus frees the individual from facing a responsibility that he or she is not ready to accept. It might be added that paranoia is rather commonplace among the elderly, who may accuse an adult son or

daughter of neglecting them and stealing their money, whereas the truth is that the adult child is doing everything possible to take good care of the failing parent.

PARANOID PERSONALITY DISORDER

On the other hand, paranoid personality disorder (PPD) is a mental disorder that can seriously affect the way a person thinks, feels, and acts, and sometimes can be very handicapping. The DSM-IV (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fourth ed.) states, "The essential feature of a Paranoid Personality Disorder is a pattern of pervasive distrust and suspiciousness of others such that their motives are interpreted as malevolent. . . . People with this disorder assume that other people will exploit, harm, and deceive them, even if no evidence exists to support this expectation." The following case demonstrates some of the typical characteristics of a person with PPD.

Sam is a 53-year-old office worker who married late in life and has no children. He is competent but prone to getting into heated disagreements with his superiors, other workers, and especially his wife. These disagreements are usually over minor matters, occasionally have caused him to change jobs and lose friends, and have made his marriage turbulent.

While Sam is reserved and, for the most part, keeps to himself, he has the reputation of exploding at the slightest provocation and is considered someone with whom to avoid controversial issues. Sometimes he tends to "make a mountain out of a molehill" by treating unimportant matters as monumental, and occasionally as matters of life and death. More often than not, Sam is absolutely sure that he is right and the other person is wrong; there is no room for compromise in his life. Occasionally, his outbursts are directed at someone in a position of authority, and as a consequence of these outbursts he becomes alienated from that person and avoids meeting or talking with him or her as much as possible.

Sam and his wife live in a middle-class suburban neighborhood, where he keeps to himself and seldom associates with his neighbors. His wife, on the other hand, is a very social person who enjoys talking with her neighbors, men as well as women. Her gregariousness is a constant bone of contention between Sam and his wife. Repeatedly, Sam has accused his wife of having an affair with one of the men in the neighborhood, which his wife vehemently denies. When this happens his wife insists that there is nothing wrong with her talking with these men. They are her friends, she says, and she has every right to converse with them. Her insistent denial of having an affair infuriates Sam, occasionally to the point that he has physically assaulted her.

In addition, Sam is convinced that his neighbors are meeting in a house down the street and plotting how to torment him. He believes that these neighbors are conspiring to get him out of the neighborhood and take over his property.

Delusional Beliefs. Some typical symptoms of PPD are delusions of persecution, through which paranoids believe, for little or no reason, that others are conspiring against them and harassing them; delusions of reference, which occur when paranoids see people talking together and conclude that those people are maligning them; and delusions of grandeur, through which paranoids have an inflated sense of worth, power, knowledge, and identity, and believe they have a special personal relationship with some famous person or persons (e.g., a politician they have never met but have simply read about in the newspaper).

An example of a delusion of persecution can be seen in Sam's conviction that his neighbors are plotting against him and planning how to torment him so as to get him to move. When Sam sees two of his neighbors or fellow workers talking together, he immediately concludes that they are maligning him—a delusion of reference.

Other Characteristics. At first contact, many mentally ill paranoids appear to be somewhat normal, like almost everyone else. It is only after listening to them for a while that their delusional beliefs become evident. Often, the first type of delusional belief to be noticed is one of persecution. Through the use of this kind of delusion, paranoids blame another individual, a number of individuals, or an organization (e.g., the police or the Central Intelligence agency) for harassing them and causing much of their own and the world's trouble. Paranoid people are convinced that an individual or group of individuals is slandering them, spreading damaging rumors about them, and even intending to physically assault them. In rare instances, people with PPD think that they must take precautionary measures to defend themselves and that otherwise they will be seriously hurt or even killed.

Waxes and Wanes. In PPD the symptoms of paranoia are much more serious than those of everyday paranoia, have become more integrated into the individual's personality, and color much of his or her outlook. Usually, the paranoia waxes and wanes according to the individual's state of mind. When the person with PPD is under great stress and emotionally upset, the paranoid symptoms become more manifest; when he or she is relatively at peace

with self and the world, the symptoms are less intrusive.

Unable to Trust. Perhaps the most characteristic trait of the person with PPD is a failure to trust others. There seems to be almost no one whom the paranoid person feels safe trusting. If someone seem to be trustworthy at first, sooner or later, the paranoid thinks, that person will show his or her true colors through a betrayal. This lack of trust causes many paranoids to fail in forming lasting, good friendships, and as a consequence they feel lonely and isolated much of the time. Since most paranoid people expect others to be untrustworthy, they constantly look for evidence to confirm this conviction.

As a consequence of their lack of trust, paranoids are unwilling to confide in others. They keep their feelings and emotions locked within themselves. They question the loyalty of others and read unintended meanings into the comments and actions of others. If others have annoyed or hurt them in some way, they tend to ruminate over these past hurts and resentments, and reflect upon how unfairly and unjustly they have been treated. For the most part, paranoids assume that people will exploit, harm, or deceive them if given the chance. They also expect to be tricked and duped, even if there is no evidence to support their expectations.

Private People. Individuals with PPD are usually very private and resent anyone who tries to pry into their personal affairs. When people with this disorder suspect that someone is trying to find out about something they consider personal, they tend to become cold and defensive. If someone persists in prying, the paranoid individual becomes openly hostile and may end the conversation by either walking away in a huff or making a cutting remark. The inquiry can be as ordinary as “How are you feeling today?”—which the paranoid sees as a personal matter and none of the other person’s business. Sometimes the person posing the question never realizes that he or she has upset the paranoid, or cannot figure out what that individual is upset about.

Overly Sensitive. People with PPD are extremely sensitive. They take offense where no offense was intended. They interpret the words and actions of another as attacking them when no attack was intended, and often the person who has supposedly offended the paranoid person has no understanding of what he or she has done to offend that individual. Unfortunately, a paranoid person may hold a

grudge against the supposed offender that can last for years.

While people with PPD are overly critical of others, they themselves are overly sensitive to the slightest indication of criticism. When criticized in any way, they see themselves as under attack. Because of their self-centeredness and oversensitivity, paranoids tend to feel criticism more deeply than most other people. They fail to take into consideration how other people feel, and thus often lack both sympathy and empathy. When paranoids hurt others by being overly critical or making cutting remarks, they seldom think about the effects of their words—or, if they do, they tell themselves that those effects are deserved because the recipients have treated them unjustly.

On the other hand, a sharp word or slightly critical remark from another can deeply offend paranoid people, cause them to feel sorry for themselves and to ask themselves how anyone can be so callous and cruel. Because of criticism they consider unjustifiable, paranoids may spend hours ruminating on how unjust the world is, how evil certain people are, and how the world needs to get rid of such offenders. To pacify their anger and hurt, paranoids often tell themselves that the day of reckoning is coming, when all those who have treated them so unfairly will get their due.

Negative Outlook. Paranoids have a tendency to look at the world from a negative point of view. Often, their overall outlook on life is extremely pessimistic and bleak, and they expect others to look at the world the same way they do. In conversation with others, they cling tenaciously to their negative views and may even go so far as to accuse others of being ignorant or out of touch with reality if they do not share those views. In every argument they must always have the upper hand and the last word, even if their key contentions are extremely negative.

Unwilling to Forgive. Once a person with PPD has been offended or hurt by another, he or she bears an animosity or grudge toward the offending party that can last for months or even years. Whether the offense is actual, imagined, or the result of misinterpreting another’s words or actions makes little or no difference. Paranoid people do not seem to be able to let go of their grievances; instead, they turn them over and over in their minds and, as a consequence, build up greater anger within themselves. As time goes on they can become even more set in their hostility or hatred toward the offending party and even less likely to forgive.

Sense of Inadequacy and Inferiority. People with PPD take a dim view of themselves. They feel that

they are inferior and inadequate when compared with other people, but at the same time they may try to give the impression that they are as bright and capable as anyone else—even to the extent of using delusions of grandeur to mask their feelings of inferiority and inadequacy.

They may react quite negatively when a friend or family member is complimented, because they see complimenting the other person as placing them in a lesser position, and may react by talking about their own accomplishments. Frequently, their delusions of persecution involve someone in a high position, and someone they esteem. When people with PPD talk about having a close relationship with some very important person, they make themselves feel more important, which masks their feeling of inferiority. Also, hearing people talk about them, no matter what they say, gives paranoids a sense of importance; it shows that people are taking notice of their presence and thinking about them.

PARANOID SCHIZOPHRENIA

Paranoid schizophrenia is one of several types of schizophrenia, a psychotic disorder, and different from a personality disorder. In addition to delusions of persecution, reference, and grandeur, paranoid schizophrenics often have auditory and visual hallucinations. That is, the afflicted individual has false sensory perceptions that occur in the absence of related sensory stimuli. For instance, a schizophrenic man sees a long-deceased uncle and converses with him as though he were actually in the room with him, or a woman hears the voice of an angel telling her what God wants her to do. Hallucinations are almost always abnormal and can affect any of the five senses, but usually they are auditory and visual. Some paranoid schizophrenics have religious hallucinations. They see a vision of the Blessed Virgin on the outside wall of their house, or devils lurking in the shadows of their bedroom.

Paranoid schizophrenics make up a large proportion of the psychotic population in the USA. They occasionally seek the assistance of a pastoral counselor or spiritual director but are usually beyond their expertise and need further professional help. However, counselors and spiritual directors should be able to recognize the symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia, should someone with that disorder come to them for assistance.

Schizophrenics are usually convinced that the visions, voices, and delusions they experience are well founded and valid. As a consequence, these individ-

uals can become veritable crosses to their families or relatives, who try to help them, as they can seldom be talked out of believing what they hold as true. Moreover, a family member or relative can easily become the target of a schizophrenic's delusions of persecution and looked upon as someone who is maligning and harassing the schizophrenic. When this happens, the family member may also need professional counseling in order to deal with what can be a very trying situation.

Often the paranoid schizophrenic does not have all the symptoms of the other forms of schizophrenia, such as disorganized and unintelligible speech, bizarre behavior, and inappropriate emotional responses, and may at first seem somewhat normal—but further conversation clearly reveals that something is wrong with this person's thinking, way of feeling, and acting.

The schizophrenic person may live at home with his or her parents or other family members. In periods of severe stress, however, the paranoid symptoms may become so acute that family members are no long able to take adequate care of the individual, and he or she may need to spend time in a mental hospital. When this happens, it is usually because the schizophrenic person has become a danger to himself or herself or to another person or persons and their property.

DEALING WITH PARANOID PEOPLE

The following remarks are suggestions that may be helpful in dealing with people who have PPD, and possibly with paranoid schizophrenics if they are not too far removed from reality.

First, be aware that paranoid people look at the world quite differently than you do, and that their paranoia colors much of their thinking and emotional reactions, quite often determining how they act. What you consider reasonable and valid may not be reasonable and valid to them, and paranoids are almost always convinced that they are right and you are wrong.

Keep in mind that paranoids have a difficult time trusting anyone, so try to foster trust by being positive and affirming. Do not challenge their delusions.

Avoid criticizing people with PPD. Most paranoids are likely to take criticism as an attack or a belittlement of their intelligence.

Do not defend a person the paranoid is criticizing, lest he or she consider you to be in alliance with the party being criticized, and against him or her.

Be aware that paranoia waxes and wanes according to the disposition and the amount of stress the paranoid is experiencing. At times, anything you say

will be met with an angry rebuttal; at other times, the paranoid will be more open to what you have to say—but even then, realize that a tentative statement is more likely to be accepted than a confrontational one.

Do not directly challenge the paranoid's delusional beliefs. Most paranoids are convinced that their beliefs are absolutely true and valid, no matter how outlandish they may seem to you. Challenging them may cause the paranoid to become angry and to turn against you, or at least will undermine his or her trust in you.

When it becomes evident that the paranoid is becoming upset, move on to another topic. Nothing is to be gained by continuing with a topic that is upsetting.

Try to be positive and upbeat, but remember that paranoids are constantly looking for someone to confirm their negativity and irrational beliefs.

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Life by a Waterfall

Julie McCole, O.S.F.

We live in a mobile society. It is the rare person today who does not know what it is like to pack up all one's belongings and move from place to place. Sometimes new beginnings, although brimming with the promise of awaiting adventures and exciting challenges, conjure up an array of mixed emotions. Saying goodbye to family, friends, neighbors, congregational members, and colleagues is never easy. Even if the move is self-initiated and hope-filled, leaving all that is familiar and going into uncharted territory can be a very disarming experience.

HOLY GROUND

What saves me from total panic when faced with a new journey is a quote from J. D. Salinger that has become a lived reality for me: "All we do our whole lives is go from one little piece of holy ground to another."

Holy ground: land bursting with the presence of the God who created it. Sangre de Cristo Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is one of those hallowed places. Its 680 acres bear testimony to the vibrancy and resiliency inherent in the profound creation spirituality of the Native American people who lived on its mesas and in its valleys. This holy ground is richly

blessed because of the water that flows through the property.

Yes, water is God's most precious gift to all who reside at Sangre or in its vicinity. Originating high in the mountains, the stream makes its way down the steep slopes, cascading across the rocks, producing a full-bodied waterfall. The stream rushes on to form the Chupadero River, which eventually empties into the Rio Grande.

In the desert, water is the difference between life and death. If the winter storms do not provide snow and rain for the region, drought is inevitable. The earth loses its lifeline, which makes it incapable of sustaining animal or plant growth. The summer months are passed in hardship.

LETTING GO

Little did I know what effect this stark landscape would have on my soul when I answered God's call to the Southwest, to Sangre, to self, and to service. I first came to Sangre in 1996. Traveling from the east coast of the United States, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean, to the Southwest, land of magnificent rock formations and arroyos (dry river beds), filled my mind and heart with wonder. What did God have in store for me as I began the position of associate director of

the program and services at the Center? What would this desert land teach me about my God, my self, my ministry? Would my spirit dry up in this land of relentless blue skies, or would my soul's thirst be quenched by a waterfall of grace?

My discernment process had begun with the reading of an article about Sangre by Judy Zielinski, O.S.F., a graduate of the program (*HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*, Fall 1995). A couple of lines in her last paragraph seemed to awaken in me a desire for a firsthand experience of this sabbatical program: "Sangre may not be for every midlife wanderer. It asks a willingness to let go in the middle way." That sentence had a haunting ring to it. Maybe it was this message that prompted me to respond to an advertisement of a staff opening at Sangre.

When I arrived at Sangre's door six months later, I had an inkling of what to expect. I was joining a five-member team composed of three De LaSalle Christian Brothers, another woman religious, and myself. We strove to work in a collaborative manner as we ministered in a 100-day sabbatical program serving priests, and men and women religious, from around the world. We were an experienced, multi-talented staff of people who believed in, and integrated into our own lives, the various elements that ready one for refoundation. Although eager to begin my ministry at Sangre, I was struck by the awesomeness of the task I was undertaking. Had Sangre not been a well-established program, in existence since 1962, I probably would have wavered in my resolve.

PROGRAM OF REFOUNDATION

Under the auspices of the De LaSalle Christian Brothers, the Sangre program had begun as a continuing formation program for their men. It continued to expand its clientele sequentially through the years, serving brothers of other congregations, diocesan priests, and women religious.

The 100-day session is offered twice a year, in the fall and the spring, to 34 participants. The people who come to Sangre vary in their ministerial experiences. Ranging in age from 40 to 70, they include men and women leaving leadership positions and religious ministers who serve the global community. These are active people who will return to full-time ministerial service.

Why do these men and women choose to come to Sangre for their sabbatical experience? For the same reason Judy Zielinski and I did: "to let go in the middle way."

The middle way is not an easy path to travel, but it is the only avenue to one's best self as envisioned by

the God who created us. It begins at the threshold of refoundation's door.

Refoundation, as defined in the program's prospectus, describes the work of Sangre. Most religious are familiar with the term, which resurfaced in the writings and workshops of Gerald Arbuckle, S.M., Ph.D., over the past twenty years.

Arbuckle encouraged religious groups to go back to the roots of their congregations and rediscover the charism of their founders in an effort to reset or reground their congregations on a solid base. This reestablishment was done with an eye toward envisioning a viable future for the religious orders.

Years were devoted to searching and studying archival material in order to rediscover what had been lost. Great effort went into regaining an equilibrium that comes from a respect for the past as well as a vision for the future. It is in this spirit of re-founding that the Sangre program unfolds.

SHARING AND LEARNING

The encouragement to go back to one's roots begins almost immediately in the Sangre calendar. After participants are given a brief orientation to the house and grounds and an overview of the content of the 100 days, each staff member spends a morning telling his or her life story.

The purpose of this sharing is threefold: it serves as the staff's initial introduction to the group so the participants can get to know each of them better; it offers five different ways of sharing one's life story; and it provides information about the staff that the people might find helpful in choosing their spiritual director.

After hearing each staff member's story, the participants are invited to reflect on their own life stories and then to share them in small groups.

I vividly remember the first time I stood at the front of the conference room, readying myself for disclosure. Feeling self-conscious and vulnerable, I reluctantly began to reveal how I believe I became the person I am today.

In this process, and in the different components of the program that followed (e.g., journaling, grieving one's losses, getting in touch with one's sexuality), I found myself rediscovering the charism of the significant people in my life who had nurtured me along the way. I needed to revisit events and situations that led me to life-altering decisions in order to reground my discernment processes on a solid base. By searching and studying the archival material of my life, I was able to rediscover what had been lost. All of this led to regaining an equilibrium that comes from a

respect for where I have come from as well as a vision of where I am going.

The first baby steps toward refoundation in my life had been taken. There was no turning back now. With confidence in the process, I moved forward, utilizing the tools offered by presenters and other staff members to continue to grow in a positive, life-giving manner—with a reemphasis on the importance of a balanced life, a reorientation of the blessings and challenges of living in community, and, finally, the renewed vitality to minister effectively.

As you read my account of my experience at Sangre, you might get the impression that I was more like a participant than a staff member. There is much truth in that statement. The first year in any new position often has one straddling the line between learner and teacher. I had to completely plunge into this new experience in order to discover firsthand the language used, the rhythm lived, the balance sought, the God relationship desired, the tools employed, and the ministry embraced.

Learning all this on the job was exhausting, yet at the same time it was exhilarating. Mutuality among staff and participants was an everyday reality. The staff provided a safe environment, a quality program, spiritual direction, community-building opportunities, and assistance in the smooth running of a 100-day schedule. The participants responded with wholehearted involvement in all aspects of the program. What impressed me was the openness with which they approached the presenters, their first massage, a healthy diet, a hike up the mountain, the Eucharistic celebration, the directed retreat. Their enthusiastic commitment to the goals and objectives of this sabbatical with an inner-journey focus confirmed my own inner conviction that the Sangre philosophy works.

The profound sharing that is an integral part of time spent together has affected me deeply. In particular, the stories of participants who have served the church outside the United States have captivated my attention. Ministry in war-torn parts of the world, where people struggle for basic survival, has not been part of my firsthand experience. What courage, perseverance, faith, and generosity it takes to spend one's life on the front lines of poverty and oppression. What a privilege it is for me to help provide these ministers with an "oasis in the desert" for three and a half months so they can return to the people they

hold dear, refreshed and ready to begin their service anew.

In assisting directees and retreatants in rediscovering and deepening their relationships with God, I have been drawn into many encounters with the God who chooses to reveal God's self to us. But it is the image of the God who provides water from the rock (Gen.17:6) that speaks to me most clearly and intimately in this desert land.

WATERFALLS OF GRACE

As I stand at the edge of the stream on Sangre's property and watch the torrents of water surge over the wall of rock, this waterfall becomes for me a sign of God's never-ending love for me and all those God has created. It becomes a mighty symbol of "love following upon love, following upon love" with no end in sight. God's love pours over God's beloved people. Yes, "From God's fullness, we have all received grace in place of grace" (John 1:16).

The extravagance of God's grace cannot be contained. Lavishly given, it revives and refreshes all those who visit Sangre and continues to gush forth until it reaches the far corners of the world, where graduates of the Sangre program minister to God's people. Waterfalls of grace, praise God.

In the summer of 2002 Sister McCole will be leaving Sangre to accept the position of formation director in her congregation. Anyone interested in applying for her current position as associate director of program and services is invited to send for an application (Search Committee, Sangre de Cristo Center, 410 State Road 592, Santa Fe, NM, 87501). Applicants must have three years' experience in spiritual direction and directed retreats. They must also have administrative skills in the areas of programming and scheduling. They must be willing to live in community with the sabbatical participants and the other staff members. The position is effective August 2002.



Sister Julie McCole, O.S.F.

Prophets to Our Own Times

Brother Eagan Hunter, C.S.C.

Now that we have entered the third millennium, what are the critical challenges confronting religious life? First of all, our role as individuals and groups dedicated to the consecrated life is to be witnesses of eternal truths as these exist and function within our contemporary life and societies. Simply being a witness tends to indicate passivity. We must be more than mere witnesses; we are called to be prophets to our times.

A prophet does not see visions of the future, of things that might be. A prophet challenges the lifestyles of contemporary society and interprets the will of God in relation to achieving a better way of life. A prophet speaks, acts, or writes forcefully to make known divine counsels and God's will. Saint Luke defines this prophetic light as follows: "The spirit of God is upon me; he has anointed me. He sent me to bring good news to the poor and to heal the brokenhearted" (4:18). A prophet experiences the fractures, pains, and visions of his or her own times and their effects upon the human family.

Such an individual engages in spending and being spent in the transforming present realities, in the light of justice and love, on moral and religious levels. A prophetic role means being called to be a leading column cloud by day and a flaming pillar of fire by night to the world in which one moves. There is

need for such leadership in today's world. Frequently, this state of being is in direct contradiction to existing standards and mores of contemporary living. We cannot afford to opt for the permissive liberal agenda inherited from the twentieth century. A prophet issues a call to a higher and better form of life. Thus a prophet's life, although an essential one, is frequently misunderstood and not an easy one.

What is demanded of us in order to be effective prophets to our own times? The writings of Mother Theresa provide insights. We cannot afford to "place our hands to the plow and then look backward" to the past. We cannot afford the luxury of bemoaning things that no longer are the way they once were. The past is the past and is unchangeable. Regardless of the glorious successes achieved through various past ministries, those times and needs have receded into history. Many past activities are dated and irrelevant to our changing times. They no longer actively influence the means by which we live out the message of Jesus as expressed in contemporary terms. We need to glean the best from our past experiences and discard those that no longer are effective. In the transitional stages since Vatican Council II, we have made mistakes and probably will continue to do so while attempting to modify our lives and structures. We cannot afford to weep by the wayside over the mis-

The critical challenge of this new millennium is to redesign our religious identity and to make a commitment to the demands of becoming prophets to our own times

takes made; we must learn from them. In this way we will be enabled to grasp the complex realities of the contemporary world and fulfill our prophetic presence within that world and in the church of today. Simply put, we cannot hope tomorrow will be better. The future is not within our immediate control, although we may have a lasting impact on the lives of those living in that future world. This future belongs in the hands of God. God alone has the power and the preknowledge of that future. Our vineyard is today's marketplace. It is here that we labor, and here exists that mode of life upon which we can exert a changing influence.

MODIFY THINKING

Our task, then, is to modify our way of thinking. Many around us—religious included—have drawn the conclusion that religious life in our country is dying. This is negative and nonproductive thinking. What would happen if we modified our focus—if, instead of thinking and behaving from a death-knell philosophy, we embraced the more valid conclusion and premise that we are standing on the threshold of a rebirth of the role of religious within the contemporary church and in our modern world? What a vital and vivid message that would send to the world around us.

Unfortunately, we have permitted religious life in North America to become invisible within our society. In our efforts to develop a closer relationship to those we served—a good and valid goal and objec-

tive—we threw away many things that distinguished our witness and prophetic role. We adopted secular clothing and set aside our distinctive garb, which was universally recognized. We surrendered our united and corporate witness in ministry by scattering and dissipating our activities among many differing ministries. Thus was lost the impact of our united witnessing role. Rather than fulfilling a united mission role of evangelization—the goal embraced by our various founders—our witness impact has suffered a loss of effectiveness.

The egalitarian approach has many things in its favor. Unfortunately, it lacks one essential characteristic: people today do not need more companions. They have enough coworkers. What they seek is the emergence of brave leaders who will challenge the confusions of our own times and guide us along the right path in our mutual journey of faith into that promised land. So the critical challenge of this new millennium is to redesign our religious identity and to make a commitment to the demands of becoming prophets to our own times.

Several years have passed since the synod on consecrated life and the publication of the document *Vita Consecrata*. As we begin this new century, religious still find themselves struggling to clarify and give meaning to their lives and apostolates. Most Catholics and Christians understand the meaning, role, and symbolism of the ordained priesthood in both its diocesan and religious forms. Yet even well-educated Catholics inquire as to the role, meaning, purpose, and justification of consecrated religious life in contemporary times. This is especially true of the Brotherhood. Historically, the role of the Sisterhood over the centuries has been more visual, more clearly defined, and more understood in peoples' minds.

For centuries the church taught that there are two states in life—the ordained priesthood and the laity, either married or single. The identity and role of the consecrated religious life did not fit into either category comfortably. The Second Vatican Council recognized the existence and value of the historical consecrated religious life tradition founded upon the evangelical counsels. The Council fathers saw it as a manifestation of the divine plan that the church be graced with a wonderful variety of religious communities dedicated to service ministries in building up Christ's body, and they supported its continuing role in the present age of the church. Even so, it was not until 1992 that the church finally stated that there exist three states of life within the church: those called to the ordained clergy; those living a consecrated life formulated on the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience; and the much

broader spectrum of the laity. Each has a specific function to fulfill within the ministerium of the church. Unfortunately, as this definition has not become widely known or understood among the laity, it fails to clarify the identity crisis confronting religious.

Upon being questioned by others about their vocation and attempting to explain their service role within the church, religious frequently experience a form of identity crisis. This inability to define clearly our status leads to a form of identity diffusion—drifting without setting specific occupational or ideological directions. Some descend into a state of moratorium in their struggle to identify these occupational and ideological commitments. The inability to define our roles as religious in the church's structures becomes a barrier to the attraction of new vocations. Prospective candidates fail to see how they can serve better as teachers, nurses, social workers, and the like in the consecrated life rather than in the lay state. Even though this new definition has been formulated, it cannot be permitted to exist only in print on a yellowing page. The clarification of the role of religious in the contemporary church depends upon us. We need to vitalize it in the minds of others by making our operative roles within the church highly visible, effective, and essential.

REVITALIZE RELIGIOUS LIFE

Who are we? Why do we exist? How can we confront the needs of the contemporary church in the present-day and future societies in which we hold fraternal membership? How can we define and explain in a revealing and meaningful manner our way of life to interested persons who have been formed and shaped by the standards of our modern social, secular, and consumeristic values and norms?

Soon after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, a rather widely accepted article declared that we were observing the sunset of religious life, which had lost its relevance, purpose, and meaning within contemporary society. Not only has that not happened—although there has been a decline in some parts of the world in the total number of those living the consecrated life—but some young people are considering dedicating themselves to the service of the church through this life form. Within the Third World nations, one observes a tremendous increase in vocations to the ordained priesthood and to the religious life. It is a known fact that after each sunset comes an awe-inspiring sunrise. Could it be that we are witnessing the sunset of a historical and traditional form of the religious life and that, like the phoenix, the consecrated religious life is being puri-

fied, through divine fire, to rise renewed from these ashes in a modified, revitalized, creative form?

The decline in vocations to the religious life in some areas of the church while others are flourishing raises two issues to be scrutinized. First, we cannot afford simply to be seen as historical evidences of archaic forms of medieval and renaissance spirituality without contemporary significance and presence in Western thought and culture. We must explore new ways through which religious life can respond to the contemporary needs of society and religion. We must explore new ways of presenting our roles to the contemporary church by seeking means of confronting the modern-day concerns of human existence. In this manner, religious life in Europe and North America can experience a resurrection, a rebirth.

Second, we must recognize the expanding world mission and message of the contemporary church into regions alien to Western culture and thought. We must become flexible in our modes of religious lifestyle, accepting diverse ways of expressing and practicing worship, forming customs adapted to recognize the needs of other cultures within their own proper patrimonies that differ from the traditions of Western civilization. We must be open to enfolding these many cultures, spiritualities, and religious traditions into our religious structures, worship, and practices. We, as pilgrim people, are *in via*. What modes of new religious freedoms and adaptations will be required to accommodate the cultures and the traditions of peoples in Africa and Asia, where vocations are flourishing? We must listen to the pleas of the bishops composing the synods of Africa and Asia, who have spoken forcefully of the imperative to explore new ways of being a church—of developing greater cultural sensitivity and diversity within our religious expressions so that we are not offering systems of beliefs, of spiritualities, of liturgical worship that are foreign and strange to the peoples of Africa and Asia.

We must adapt our forms of religious life to achieve greater Catholic diversity while faithfully retaining organic unity. The resultant forms of religious life in these Third World areas must be achieved through inculturation while at the same time protecting the deposit of faith. By developing diverse traditions within our religious communities, we will be enabled to carry our prophetic mission into other geographical and cultural regions. Our diverse life forms will reflect a worldwide communion of saints being expressed through many and varied forms of spiritualities, of mutual sharing in living traditions incorporating many forms of prayer. This openness to this second challenge is a responding to our need to bear witness to the transforming message

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of the Good News to all peoples, to the emerging Catholicity within the Third World. This response can be achieved only through continuing renewal in our manners and forms of exercising the evangelical counsels, in our ways of being sensitive to other cultures and spiritualities. At the same time we must remain faithful to the spirit of our individual religious founders, who gave us specific traditions marking our spirituality and apostolates. It is our responsibility—with fidelity to our founders' charisms—to transform these creatively in our response to new challenges.

To respond adequately, we are being called to live in a purified and new form. We must be ready to let go of many comfortable and traditional practices that are outmoded in our contemporary New Testament world. In thus discarding, we will discover a reclaiming and a reworking of these traditional treasures within the basic structures and meanings of our religious lives while responding to the mandates of the evangelical counsels. This exploration, discovery, and development will open new ways, new structures, new traditions. They involve a long and complex reorientation of one's entire religious life. We must be open to translating New Testament norms into logical and pastoral applications that meet the many complex demands of our multiple contemporary worlds.

Brotherhood and Sisterhood are not a call to the ministerial service of the priesthood but an invitation to be their coworkers, to be teachers serving and responding to the needs of others. Jesus symbolized this role by washing the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper. Our service role involves the development of new forms in complimentary collegiality between the ordained and the nonordained ministerium of the church, of being present to and in our contemporary world.

Now that we have entered the new millennium, our period of experimentation over the past quarter century—a long period of time resulting in fundamental ambiguity and a deep sense of apparent alienation—must come to closure. Now is the time to walk boldly into this new century with hope. Such metamorphosis is not new within the church. It began with the desert fathers and was later transformed by Benedict and Bernard. It was through the flourishing of the Celtic monasteries and the labors of their missionaries that the Dark Ages began to be brought to conclusion. The followers of Francis and Dominic left their sheltered abbeys to live and work among the people whom they served. In the last three centuries saintly men and women formed new congregations to meet specific educational and social needs of burgeoning populations in the emerging industrial and revolutionary world. These transformed forms of religious life flourished. Others simply withered away on the vine and passed into history.

BECOME LIVING PROPHETIC SYMBOLS

By our vocation, we are called to become living prophetic symbols, challenging our own times through our faith in God and our call of service to others. What does it mean to be such a symbol in a secular, materialistic world? What are the challenges involved? What is God calling us to be, to do, to become?

Symbols are part of our contemporary world, just as we are part of that world. The word comes from the Greek *symbollein*, meaning to throw together, to compare. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines symbols as "half of a broken object, for example, a seal presented as a token of recognition. . . . The broken parts together verify the bearer's identity. The symbol of faith, then, is a sign of recognition and communion between believers." In abstract terms, symbolism is the concept that one thing, usually material and visible, is utilized to call attention to the image of its better part, usually something immaterial and unseen. Thus the prophetic symbolism of our Brotherhood and Sisterhood—being visible—projects to the world the message of our belief and confidence in the unseen God.

In our humanity, we as Brothers and Sisters are living symbols to the world of believers and unbelievers, showing that this striving for union with the unseen God can be achieved. Our Brotherhood or Sisterhood becomes a tangible sign to a torn and confused world, opening to others a way of acquiring order out of the chaos of life—a means of reaching out and drawing all into a community of believers. As consecrated men and women, our role is to present creative answers to new problems of our day, to assist others in achieving a profound experience with our Creator. This is the prophetic witness, our special gift from the Holy Spirit. This sign of contradiction to the standards and norms of the surrounding contemporary world communicates to others the possibility of living in harmony with eternal truths while resisting the many conflicting norms, values, standards, and mores of our encompassing societies.

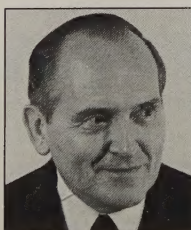
Today there is a need for such symbolic lives. It is a vocational call to our idealistic young people to become generous, creative religious dedicating themselves to serving God's people with passion, compassion, and understanding. Our world needs this message more today than in any other time. To be an effective prophetic symbol, we must become a challenge proclaimed through our radical living of the gospel's teachings. It must be seen clearly in the visible manner we religious live and minister. It must project to others that these truths have true and great value—something worth living and even dying to achieve.

Thus meeting the challenges of our own times, we religious must be flexible and responsive to the diversity of the peoples whom we are called to serve. Our responses serve as symbols of our commitment to the evangelical counsels, modified and expressed in contemporary terms. Do our lives speak to others of our belief, of our dedicated and vowed pledge to live as we believe? Are we living symbols of faith, challenging ourselves and those around us to a closer union with the Divine? Have we permitted the symbol of our lives, which once burned so brightly, to shine now only dimly? We must be prophetic, symbolic candles, dispersing the darkness in a world of ignorance, materialistic greed, mistrust, and disbelief. Individually, we can do very little. Collectively, in union of faith with our Creator, we can be molded effectively and meaningfully into living beacons, into living symbols of faith. To be such witnesses we have been called.

The world of religious life that we formerly knew no longer exists. Does this render us charred wood, or are we listening to the trumpet sounding out of the surrounding mists of the future? Will the dawn of this new century and millennium find us mourning the past as the sun of religious life quietly sets into darkness and death? Will religious life become an obsolete relic resting among the other past glories of the church? Or are we holding ourselves responsible and ready to respond creatively and heroically in transforming ourselves into living prophetic symbols of hope to a disillusioned world?

These are the challenges of a new age, of a new century, of a new millennium within the long pages of church history. We have reasons to be optimistic people. We need to have faith in our prophetic mission, characteristic of the consecrated religious life. We need to take to heart the words of Paul: "I can finish my race and complete the service to which I have been assigned by the Lord Jesus, bearing witness to the gospel of God's grace . . . for I have never shrunk from announcing to you God's design in it entirety" (Acts 20:21, 27).

Let us stride forward with confidence and hope as we respond to the sounding call of the church by taking realistic, meaningful, and concrete steps to increase our visible symbolic presence and actions through diversity in external practices and worship. We must seek and identify new opportunities for collective service, new ways of being present to our worlds. In this manner we leave behind a period of questioning, stress, tension, and struggles characteristic of the latter part of the twentieth century. We must stride into this new millennium generating new focuses, expressing new confidence and optimism about our continuing contribution to the spiritual and apostolic needs of a transforming church. Yes, there is a vital need for the meaningful prophetic symbolism of the religious life in our contemporary world, as well as in the world of tomorrow. This is the challenge of the new millennium.



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BOOK REVIEW

Achieving Moral Health: An Exercise Plan for Your Conscience by Charles M. Shelton, Ph.D.
New York, New York: Crossroad, 2000. 239 pages. \$18.95.

Example is the living law whose sway / Men more than all the written laws obey. (Alexander Pope, "Essay on Man")

Even more important than physical fitness, mental balance, and emotional maturity, moral health is crucial for individuals, families, and local and world communities. So argues clinical psychologist, college professor, internationally known consultant, and prolific author Charles M. Shelton. Adopting poet Pope's wisdom, Shelton weaves vivid contemporary examples of moral dilemmas throughout his text, together with pointed questions and imaginative scenarios for personal reflection (hence the "exercise plan" of the book's title). Despite the seriousness of the topic and the project, Shelton's tone is pleasantly conversational, and humorous cartoons along the way enhance the reader's enjoyment.

Achieving Moral Health, however, is a work of substance and depth. After demonstrating why and how conscience is humanity's unique attribute, Shelton presents seven "dimensions" of conscience that contribute to healthy moral functioning: psychic energy, defenses, empathy, guilt, idealization, self-esteem, and moral beliefs. In discussing each of these dimensions, he enters into an interdisciplinary dialogue with many of today's major writers in philosophy (Charles Taylor), ethics (James Q. Wilson), psychiatry (Robert Coles), and psychology (Martin Hoffman), as well as leading thinkers in other fields. Especially through the use of examples, Shelton shows that the dimensions interact dynamically and provide conscience with its rich texture and profound depths. His insights range from basics (the need for adequate sleep) to cultural commentary (reasons for the astounding discrepancy between survey participants' ratings of America's moral decline and their own high moral performance) to complex, nuanced

descriptions of topics like genuine authenticity, wise parenting, and the mature functioning of conscience in work and relationships.

Shelton has made a conscious decision not to mention God or to indicate that he is a Roman Catholic Jesuit priest, because he views conscience as a bridging tool that can unite us and remind all of us—regardless of race, creed, or ethnic origin—that we share a common moral humanity. He reaches out, in an ecumenical embrace, to all who are in any way "spiritual" (concerned about values and higher moral goals and behaviors) rather than only to "religious" folk. Nevertheless, Shelton's Daily Moral Inventory, referred to several times in various chapters, seems to be his preferred exercise and closely resembles Ignatius Loyola's "Examination of Consciousness." Such a daily life-review enjoys an ancient secular lineage, of course, going back through Thomas Jefferson and the Pythagoreans of ancient Greece. Shelton updates the practice and makes it attractive to all who seek insight into their deeper feelings and motives.

Though in dialogue with contemporary scholars, Shelton is his own man. For example, he proposes that guilt can be both unhealthy and healthy (i.e., moral—against much of the psychological establishment). He takes on the ideologies of the self-esteem movement among educators, eloquently insisting that self-esteem must be flavored by realism of effort and achievement, respect for persons, and responsibility. He shows how defenses can be both unhealthy and healthy, and insists persuasively that compartmentalization is *the* defense of the twenty-first century.

My one criticism of the volume concerns not what he has written but what he has not mentioned. Shelton is such a synthetic yet original thinker that I believe his work would be even richer if he had entered into dialogue with theologians or Christian ethicists (e.g., James Gustafson, David Hollenbach). While Paul Tillich gets mentioned several times, nary another theologian appears in the pages of *Achieving Moral Health*.

In sum, Shelton's seven dimensions of conscience remedy the excessive individualism and subjectivism of our postmodern culture, revalue emotion in a discussion that is often overly cognitive, and ground individual and communal authenticity in the good.

—William J. Sneek, S.J., Ph.D.